

Exc. Journ. of Theology.

Hom.

Cl.

Hom.

Book

University of Chicago Library.

GIVEN BY

Exc. Journ. of Theology.

Besides the main topic this book also treats of

Subject No.

On page

Subject No.

On page





THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

THE
RULING ELDER AT WORK

BY

REV. J. ASPINWALL HODGE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "WHAT IS PRESBYTERIAN LAW?"



NEW YORK

A. D. F. RANDOLPH COMPANY

1897

THE
NEW
YORK
LIBRARY

OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK

BX9195

.H7

COPYRIGHT, 1897, BY
A. D. F. RANDOLPH COMPANY

Press of J. J. Little & Co.
Astor Place, New York

PREFACE

We have many excellent books on the office of the Ruling Elder. It has been shown to be a divine ordinance in every dispensation of the church of God, and an essential part of the Form of Government taught in the Old and New Testaments. The nature of this office, its dignity, importance, responsibilities and rewards; the manner and spirit in which its duties are to be performed; its trials and encouragements; and wherein it differs from the other permanent offices of the church, have been carefully set forth. My experience, however, as Pastor and Teacher, has convinced me, that both in our Seminaries and congregations, instruction in church polity should be practical as well as theoretical. Our students feel this, when they enter upon the active duties of the ministry. I am not surprised that Ruling Elders also are desiring instruction, in a practical form, concerning their office and duties.

In this little book, I have attempted to meet the demand, by personating a Ruling Elder under a Pastor well qualified to develop his efficiency. The experiences narrated, questions considered, responsibilities encountered, difficulties and encouragements met, are real occurrences, and form part of the life of every Elder, who is efficient in the Session

PREFACE

and higher judicatories. The information given is drawn, partly from the Constitution of our church and the decisions of the General Assembly interpreting it; and partly from personal study and observation during two long pastorates under very different circumstances. The value of which may by some be questioned. Some of the cautions and suggestions, concerning certain forms of christian activity, now very popular, will not meet with general favor, but are commended to the serious consideration of all.

The book was prepared for Elders, but may be an aid to Pastors in their work, and in developing the efficiency of their church officers. It may lead them, and the candidates for the ministry, to take a deeper interest in larger works on church polity and pastoral theology.

J. ASPINWALL HODGE.

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, Chester Co., Pa.,

May 1, 1897.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. NOMINATED A RULING ELDER	I
II. ELECTED RULING ELDER	13
III. ORDAINED A RULING ELDER	18
IV. THE MODERATOR AND QUORUM OF SESSION.	22
V. THE CHURCH DISTRICTED	26
VI. RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION .	29
VII. SESSIONAL MEETING AFTER THE COMMUNION	43
VIII. INFANT BAPTISM	50
IX. DISMISSIONS	59
X. BAPTIZED MEMBERS	66
XI. SABBATH SCHOOLS	70
XII. YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS	78
XIII. MISSIONARY SOCIETIES	85
XIV. THE TRUSTEES	93
XV. THE ANNUAL MEETING	107
XVI. PRIVATE MEETINGS OF SESSION	113
XVII. DISCIPLINE	119
XVIII. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS	133

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX. PASTOR'S VACATION	138
XX. CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY	148
XXI. DELEGATES TO PRESBYTERY	161
XXII. ELDER AT PRESBYTERY	165
XXIII. THE SYNOD	174
XXIV. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY	181
XXV. RESIGNATION OF PASTOR	188
XXVI. VACANT CHURCH	200
INDEX	211

The Ruling Elder at Work

I

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

The Pastor of our church has just informed me, that the Session has decided that the number of Elders should be increased. This has long been regarded necessary. A meeting of the church will soon be called for that purpose. I am troubled, because the Session desire to nominate me as one of the new Elders. I wanted to decline at once, but the Pastor informs me that I should with care and prayer consider what may be my duty. He urges that, while the communicants have the privilege to nominate and elect their own representatives, they have the right to expect the advice of the Session, as its members are in a position to consider the questions involved more fully than the communicants can. They are required constantly to observe the christian character and efficiency of the members of the church, and are thus prepared to judge of the personal qualifications of those to be nominated. From their intimate knowledge of the people, they should be able to propose those who

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

would be most acceptable to the various classes in the congregation, and who can best represent them. And being well acquainted with the peculiarities of themselves and of the Pastor, they can best select those who are qualified to coöperate with them in maintaining the unity of the church and the spirituality of the members. On the other hand, the Session ought not to be a self-perpetuating body. It should impart the information which it possesses, and give advice, but the communicants can nominate and elect whom they please. Our Session, feeling the responsibility, had, after long and serious consideration, by a unanimous vote, determined to nominate me as one of the new Elders.

The question is, therefore, distinctly before me, and I must consider it. The deliberate judgment of the officers of the church demands respect, and my Pastor adds that he knows that the desire is general in the congregation to have me an Elder. He has helped me much, instructing me as to the nature of the office and of the call to it. The Eldership is a scriptural office and the most ancient. It was instituted by the great Head of the church. It differs from the ceremonial and typical offices—those of the prophets, priests, and kings of the old dispensation, which prefigured Christ and His redemptive work; and from the extraordinary and temporary offices of Apostles, Workers of miracles, etc., of the new dispensation, which were for important emergencies and for temporal service. It differs from that of the Minister, who is the representative or ambassador of God, to preach the gos-

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

pel, persuading men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, and who presides in church courts, ordains, administers the sacraments, and pronounces the benediction. And it differs from that of the Deacon, who is ordained to serve tables, and see that no class of the poor is neglected in the daily ministrations. The Eldership is the most ancient and permanent office in the church. Through all dispensations it has remained essentially the same in character and work. The Elders exercised their functions under the Patriarchs; when the church in the family became that of a race in bondage in Egypt; when delivered and entering in covenant with God at Sinai; when wandering in the wilderness under Moses; conquering their possessions under Joshua; disciplined, during the times of the Judges; in the undivided, and in both sections of separated Kingdoms of Israel and Judah; during the Babylonian captivity; at the time of Christ's ministry; and in the New Testament Church as established by the Apostles. And John beheld them before the throne, with those "which were redeemed from the earth." Its dignity and importance is therefore beyond all question.

The character and functions of this office have always been the same. Our Form of Government says, "Ruling Elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with Pastors or Ministers. This office has been understood, by a great part of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to be designated in the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Holy Scriptures by the title of governments; and of those who rule well, but do not labor in the word and doctrine." They were so treated in Egypt when the tasks of the people were not fulfilled, and Moses brought to the tribes God's promise of deliverance. What he said to them, was said to the whole congregation. When they bowed and worshipped, or murmured, it was the act of all the people. When the Lord revealed Himself and will to the Elders, He entered into covenant with all Israel. So through all the history of the Old and New Testaments the Elders were the representatives of the congregation, spake in their name and acted for them. When the Apostles assembled the Elders, and charged them and wrote to them, they regarded them as the church. Their communications were not to them as individuals, but as representatives of the people to whom they must report God's word.

And their function was to rule; that is, to apply the law of God to all those under their supervision. The ceremonial observances were under the direction of the Priests. But all offences against the moral law, violations of duty towards God and towards man, wrongs against person and property, and all controversies between man and man, were brought before the Elders. The establishment of the kingdom made no change in this respect. Matters of national policy were determined by the king and his officers, but whatever concerned personal conduct and relations, was, even in the apostate kingdom, decided by the Elders. No distinction

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

was made between civil and religious offences. All misdemeanors under the Theocracy were sins against God and His church, as well as wrongs against men, and this is still true. The Romans interfered as little as possible with the forms of government in the lands which they conquered. The authority of the Elders and their courts were in full force during the life of Christ. And the Apostles ordained Elders in every church, and charged them to rule well, to take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.

To this office the Session wish to nominate me. Were it the ministry, I should first have felt the internal call of the Holy Ghost furnishing me with gifts and inclining me to consecrate myself to Christ's service as His ambassador to men. The external call from the church would follow and confirm my conviction. But in the case of the eldership, the call from the church must come first. The judgment of my qualifications, my adaptability to coöperate with the existing officers, and my acceptability to the members of the church, must be determined by the Session and the congregation. I am not in a position to form a correct opinion, but must accept their decision, unless the Spirit shows me that they have made a mistaken estimate of my character, and that I could not serve the church to the edification of the members. My shrinking from responsibility; unwillingness to be regarded as a leader in spiritual things, and the conviction that others are better qualified, should not deter me.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Such estimate of the office and of self by another, I would regard as important indication of fitness. My past inactivity in church work; and even hesitation to take a prominent part in the prayer meetings, can not be urged as an excuse, for I know that the wrong should be corrected, and the office will encourage and stimulate me to be more faithful as a communicant. If I am called to be an Elder, by the church and by Christ, business engagements, social and family duties and pleasures must not stand in my way. Proper arrangements must be made, that nothing may interfere with the higher obligations of my office. The dignity and responsibility of the Eldership are not generally understood, because its divine origin and claims are not duly recognized. My fidelity must not be determined, nor measured, by that of those now in office, nor by what the people may expect. The Word of God must be my only guide. I will have to give myself wholly to this ministry. Self-denial will often be required, but should be joyfully rendered. My sole motive should be to please Christ, in serving His church, and advancing His cause. Special grace is promised to those who take the oversight of His people. I cannot, therefore, oppose the wish of the Session, unless there be something in the vows, to be taken at ordination, which I am unable to assume. These are as follows:

1. "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"

This question is put to all who teach, rule or

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

serve in our church. It consists of two statements. That the Bible is the Word of God and in this differs from all other books. It not only contains, but is, the Word of God. Holy men wrote it, but only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It is not necessary that I should understand how this was accomplished, nor that I adopt some particular theory of inspiration. I must hold that the Bible is the very Word of God. The other statement is, that this Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. It claims to be the source of all doctrine, "of what we are to believe concerning God, and of what duty God requires of man." It must be recognized as the supreme and sole authority in the church. Only what it declares to be sin is sin—and offenders are to be dealt with according to its directions. Since it is the Word of God, it is infallible—without mistake or error. Our English translation may not be exact, and interpretations may be wrong, but the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments are infallible.

2. "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture?" Communicants are not required to adopt "The Confession of Faith,"—they are received on their knowledge of the plan of salvation, their profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and their understanding of the nature of the sacraments. They are to be taught in the doctrines of the church. But all the officers, Ministers, Elders, and Deacons, are required to acknowledge that the Confession of

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Faith states the system of doctrine taught in the Bible, and to adopt it as the expression of their own belief and as the truth which they will teach and exemplify. There may be some expressions in the Confession of Faith which they do not approve, and statements of doctrines which they do not hold. But they must receive and adopt the system of doctrine and all that is essential to that system. I must therefore carefully read this part of the Constitution of the church, and if I find in it anything which I think is contrary to Scripture and my belief, I must have a free conversation with my Pastor.

3. "Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in these United States?" Reference is here made to "The Form of Government" and to the "Book of Discipline." These I must carefully study, comparing their provisions with the statements of Scripture, that I may intelligently express my approval of them. The three principles of Presbyterianism, as taught in the Form of Government, are, *first*, that Ministers are the highest officers in the church and are of equal authority; *second*, that the people have a right to take part in the government of the church, and that they do so by representatives chosen by them; and, *third*, that the Church is one, and this unity is expressed and maintained by Courts of Review and Appeal. This secures uniformity of doctrine and practice in all parts of the church and gives to every one the privilege of the judgment of the whole body. The Episcopal form is mon-

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

archial—the Ministers are of three orders, the Deacons being subject to the Priests and these to the Bishops, and the laity have no part in the government of the church. The Congregational form is democratic; all authority concerning doctrine and discipline is in the male communicants of the individual church, and when a council of churches is called, only advice is given. The Presbyterian form is republican; the government is by representatives. Representation is, according to the Old and New Testaments, the fundamental principle of doctrine and polity. The covenants of works, of redemption, and of grace are the development of it in doctrine. In church government, Christ is the Head of His people and stands for them before the throne. Ministers are His ambassadors and exercise authority in His name. Elders represent the people, and as such share with the ministers the oversight of the church.

4. “Do you accept the office of Ruling Elder in this congregation, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof?” There is nothing in this that should cause me to hesitate. The duties will be new to me, and I must be willing to learn what they are, and how they should be performed. By prayer I can obtain divine guidance, and my Pastor and the present members of the Session will instruct and help me.

5. “Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?” This touches the object for which God has instituted this office. The *peace* is the loving harmony of the members. They

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

have diverse characters and each has his faults and sins. These appear in the home, in social and business life, in public worship, and christian activity. They often cause "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," and antagonistic parties in the congregation. These ought not to be so much as named among christians. They should be guarded against and re-proved, but they can be eradicated only by bringing christians near to Christ in character and conduct. Loving Him, they will learn to forgive and forbear, loving one another in Him. He who studies the peace of the church must himself live near Christ, and at all times manifest His spirit in dealing with men.

The *unity* of the church includes the mutual recognition and sociability of the members, their sympathy, their understanding and maintaining the same system of doctrine, encouraging and helping each other in the duties, temptations, and trials peculiar to each, and in their activity in christian work. All should be employed, each with his own gifts doing his own part and coöperating with all. It includes also their loyalty to the worship and operations of their own church, the knowledge of the different courts and their functions, and an interest and participation in the general work of the denomination, especially as conducted by the Boards established by the General Assembly. This unity is to be maintained by sound instruction, through competent teachers, in the pulpit, Sabbath school, Young People's Association, and Mission-

NOMINATED A RULING ELDER

ary Societies and Bands. Special attention should be given to the teaching of the young. In studying the unity of the church, I should have a clear knowledge of the doctrines taught in the Scriptures, in the Confession of Faith and in the Catechisms, and see that these are taught. Loyalty to the particular church, and the unifying of its members and of the denomination in faith and practice, should lead to a recognition of individuals and bodies worshipping the same divine Christ and depending on His redemption, as parts of the church of Christ, which "consists of all those persons, in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ and of submission to His laws." We should lead our communicants to respect their membership, worship, discipline and ministry.

The *purity* of the church depends upon the truth taught. What we are, is determined by what we believe. Departure from the pure truth very quickly leads to practices contrary to the gospel. The instruction given to the old and young must be pure, free from all vagueness and adulterations. This purity of the doctrine must be exemplified in the lives of all the members. Persistent wrongdoers must be excluded from the communion of the church. Yet discipline in all its forms has for its object, not the punishment but the reformation of offenders. It must be exercised, therefore, with the meekness of Christ, with much patience and love. Expulsion should be resorted to only when all other means have failed to produce consistent christian

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

living. In studying the purity of the church, the Elder should have a proper supervision of the members, guarding the young from temptation, warning and entreating those who are being led into sin and recalling those who have wandered. His own life must be pure, through the constant study of the Word, and by a prayerful conformity to Christ's will in spirit and act.

I notice that the communicants are to make corresponding vows—to receive me as an Elder, and to yield to me that “honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord, to which the office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this church entitles me.” This will make the responsibility of the Eldership much lighter and should render it delightful. With their confidence and prayers much spiritual good should result to them and to me. I find, therefore, nothing in these vows to hinder my accepting the office, but much to encourage and help me in so doing, should I be elected.

II

ELECTED RULING ELDER

It has been known for some time that an election for Elders would be held. According to our Form of Government, the Session called a meeting of the church for this purpose. Due notice was given from the pulpit on Sabbath (usually ten days' notice is given, that all members may be informed and make arrangements to be present). The Pastor, being Moderator of the Session, presided, and the Clerk of Session recorded the minutes. The Pastor announced the object of the meeting, reading the resolution of Session, calling it. He then stated the warrant and nature of the office of Ruling Elder, together with the character proper to be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled.

One of the members proposed that our church adopt the Rotary Eldership—as provided in the Form of Government, chapter xiii., section 8, and urged as its advantages—that the aged, inefficient, and those anxious to be relieved of responsibility might be easily and honorably retired, that yearly elections would make the Elders more truly representatives of the people, and that a rotation in office would bring a greater number of communicants into christian responsibility and work, and

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

thus the whole congregation would become better instructed in our form of church government. This was seconded. Others urged that these advantages of the rotary system were more supposed than real, and did not counterbalance the acknowledged evils of the excitement and the disturbances of annual elections, the hurt feelings of those rotated out of office, the rise of parties to secure, or prevent, re-elections, the instability of the character of the Session, the lessening the sense of responsibility of those in office, the depriving the Pastor of his official advisers when trained to be of real service to him, and the decrease of the influence of the church in the higher courts, necessitating the sending inexperienced delegates. It was decided to retain the permanent system. The Pastor expressed his satisfaction, stating that he felt sure that his pastoral work would be more efficient when surrounded by experienced Elders, who had long known the communicants and who were permanently to share with him the responsibilities of office. There are legitimate methods of retiring Elders when they became inefficient or unacceptable, and new men should from time to time be introduced into the Session, when it may appear expedient, and proper persons can be found.

He further stated, that it was the privilege of the members of the church to nominate and elect their own representatives. But it was also their right to expect advice from the Session, who had the constant supervision of the communicants. He therefore called on the Clerk to read the nominations

ELECTED RULING ELDER

made by the Session, reminding the members that other nominations were in order, and all were perfectly free to vote for those considered by them most desirable. Other nominations were made. One was Rev. Mr. Alexander, a retired Minister, a teacher in the Sabbath school, and efficient helper in the work and worship of the church. The Moderator spoke highly of him, but decided this nomination to be out of order, as the General Assembly had affirmed that a Minister could not serve as Ruling Elder.

The question was asked—Who had the right to vote? The Moderator replied—All the communicants in good standing, male and female, of whatever ages. Baptized members, not communicants, could not vote; nor those regularly attending our service and supporting our ordinances but whose membership was elsewhere; nor Ministers, for they are not under the supervision of the Session.

The election was by ballot. Tellers were appointed by the Moderator to collect and count the votes, and report to him the result. Those nominated by the Session were all elected, except one, and another was chosen, who had been nominated by a member at this meeting. He was assured that he would be cordially received by the Session. We were requested to take this action of the church into serious consideration, and to be present at the next meeting of Session, prepared to give our decision, that arrangements may be made for our ordination and installation. The clerk then read the minutes, which were approved, and the meeting

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

adjourned with prayer. The records were preserved in a book kept for the minutes of meetings called by the Session. The records of other congregational meetings are kept in another book; in the charge of the Trustees or Deacons.

Had the rotary system been adopted, the existing Elders, while retaining their Eldership, would cease to be acting Elders or members of the Session; if reëlected, they would not be reordained, but must be reinstalled. The Elders elected to form the Session under that system would be divided into three classes to serve one, two and three years. This division could be made either at the time of election, or by those elected, meeting for that purpose before the ordination and installation. The former members of Session would be, of course, eligible and might be nominated as Elders on the rotary system. There would be an election each year for one third of the Session, and those elected must be chosen to serve three years, unless to complete the unexpired term of one who has ceased to be an acting Elder. In all cases there must be an installation before any can become a member of the Session. Should the congregation wish at any time to return to the permanent Elder system, it can be accomplished by a vote of the communicants.

When we, the Elders-elect, met the Session, we were warmly greeted by the Pastor and the Elders. We were each asked in turn, if we were ready to accede to the expressed desire of the church. We replied in the affirmative. It was resolved that the ordination take place next Sabbath morning. One

ELECTED RULING ELDER

of our number had been an Elder in another church, but he is to be installed at the same time with us. We were much impressed with the seriousness of all the members, with the orderly yet informal manner of conducting the business, and with the free and confidential conversation held concerning the spiritual condition of the congregation and of the individual communicants. We of course had no vote at this meeting, but it was an important introduction to our work. It was proposed to district the congregation, that each Elder might have special supervision over a certain district, visiting those living therein, and keeping the Pastor informed of the sick and others needing his ministrations. This will make our work more definite and pleasant.

III

ORDAINED A RULING ELDER

In his sermon the Pastor stated the "warrant and nature of the office of Ruling Elder, together with the character to be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled by the officers elect." I was glad that I had, by previous meditation and prayer, prepared for this solemn service. I felt that I was obeying Christ's call, and making my vows to Him, when, with the others, I stood before the Pastor (the existing Elders standing with him), and assented to the five required vows. The communicants then arose and answered the question put to them—"Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive these brethren as Ruling Elders, and do you promise to yield them all that honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord, to which their office, according to the Word of God, and the constitution of this church, entitles them?" We then knelt before the Pastor, and he ordained us by prayer with the laying on of his hands. The ordination is sometimes without the laying on of hands. He who had been previously ordained, was asked only the fourth and fifth questions and was declared with us duly installed over this church. The Pastor welcomed us to the Session, and the Elders

ORDAINED A RULING ELDER

said to each of us—"We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part of this office with us," thus publicly welcoming us, and pledging sympathy and coöperation. The Pastor then gave charges, or exhortations, to us, and to the members of the church concerning our relations and new duties. The whole service was impressive and will exert a lasting influence on those present. I pray that I may always remember my responsibility to Christ, and the vows which I have now made to Him and before His church.

I have been placed in authority as an Elder. Yet I am myself subject, with all other communicants, to the jurisdiction of the Session. For any inconsistency of conduct or unfaithfulness in christian or official activity, or disloyalty to the church or Pastor, the Session should call me to account, and the more so because I am an Elder, set over others as their example and guide.

My ordination did not make me a Minister. I am one of the Pastor's official advisers, but can not share his ministerial authority, or responsibility; nor can I, with the other Elders, call in question his fidelity. He is accountable to the Presbytery. In all his relations to the Session and church, he exercises Presbyterian supervision. As an Elder, I am to labor under his direction, to assist him in his knowledge of the people, in the services of the church and Sabbath schools, and in more private ministrations, to maintain his honor and authority in the congregation. I am to exercise government and discipline, but only "in conjunction with Pas-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

tors or Ministers." As an Elder, I can call the attention of the Deacons to any case of need in the congregation, but have no control over the poor fund, which is solely under their charge. Nor have I any control over the finances of the church. These are administered, according to the act of incorporation or the charter, by the Deacons or Trustees. To them belongs the care of the real estate and other properties, the collection of money, the payment of salaries and bills, the care of the buildings and the preparation of them for such uses and at such times as are determined by the Session. My responsibility in this respect as a member of Session can extend only to when and how the church buildings shall be used.

The members of Session are "charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation." This is an important responsibility, and distinct from that committed to others. My advice and help may often be desired and should be freely given, but I have no authority in other matters, and should not interfere with the work belonging to other officers. There is nothing in our Form of Government to forbid an Elder being elected a Trustee. In small churches this is often necessary, but in the larger ones it is seldom expedient. In some places, however, it has been found desirable that one member of the Session should be on the Board of Trustees to secure mutual understanding and harmonious coöperation. Where there are no Deacons, the care of the poor and of the poor fund devolves on the Session. Should an Elder cease to

ORDAINED A RULING ELDER

be an active Elder, and be elected Deacon, the offices being distinct, he must be ordained as Deacon and installed as such.

Once a year the records of the Board of Deacons must be examined and approved by the Session.

IV

THE MODERATOR AND QUORUM OF SESSION

The Pastor was anxious to have the plan of districting the congregation adopted, so that the Elders might enter at once on their organized work. He had intended to call a meeting of Session after the Wednesday evening prayer meeting. But the night proved very stormy, and only two of the Elders were present. He alone can call a meeting and must himself be present. Our Form of Government does not determine what notice should be given, but implies that the Pastor shall use discretion and courtesy in giving due notice to each member of Session. He, being present with two Elders, could have held a meeting that evening; this being a legal quorum, however large the Session may be. But as the matter to be considered was of much importance and concerned all the members, he deemed it inexpedient to hold a meeting. We had a long informal talk on the subject of districting the congregation and concerning the quorum of Session. He answered two questions which had puzzled me.

First, Why in a Session consisting only of the Pastor and two Elders, all the members are required

THE MODERATOR AND QUORUM OF SESSION

to form a quorum? The sickness, or the necessary or wilful absence, of one, would prevent the transaction of business. He replied that the Minister should always be present, as representing the Presbytery and exercising its supervision. His function was to moderate rather than to rule. The real responsibility of government should be on the Elders, the representatives of the people. Were only one Elder present, the power would in fact be in the hands of the Minister. The people would not have a substantial part in the government of the church, which is one of the great principles of Presbyterianism. When there is but one Elder, this is unavoidable. The disadvantage, however, is not serious, because the church in that case would be small, and would have but few cases of importance, or of discipline; and it would be temporary, only until the church increased in numbers. When there are but two Elders, it is evident that both should take part in all that is done. It need never be difficult to arrange the place and time of meeting to suit the convenience of three men. If one of these Elders has removed from the place, or wilfully refuses to act, or has withdrawn from the church without resigning his office, the other Elder is to be regarded as the only Elder. Those who have removed to a distance, or who for any reason can not, or will not, perform their duties of attending the services of their church and of taking the oversight of the congregation, should be requested to resign their office. Should they neglect to do so, the fact should be reported to Presbytery, that

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

permission may be obtained to retire them from the active duties of the office, or they should be cited to answer charges for neglect.

The other question was, Why in a large Session, say of twelve Elders, only two are necessary to constitute a quorum? The Pastor replied: In a large church there would be a great deal of mere formal business, which would be greatly delayed, if nothing could be done until a majority could be secured. The Elders of such a church would be busy men, in secular and church work, and would find it difficult to attend frequent meetings to act in these matters, while at any sacrifice they would be present when important business was to be transacted. Each Elder is the representative of the whole church, and is competent to act in the name of all. Two Elders, under the leadership of the Pastor, are therefore sufficient to form a quorum. They represent the communicants and would have the controlling vote. All questions of law and order are determined of course by the Pastor.

I asked what should be done if the Minister was sick, or on his vacation, and a meeting was necessary? His reply was, When the Pastor is to be absent for some time, he, "with the concurrence of the Elders," should appoint a Minister of the same Presbytery to call and moderate meetings. Should he be sick, he should be consulted, unless too ill, in which case the Elders should invite a Minister to preside (but always of the same Presbytery), or if this be impracticable, one of their own number may preside. But such Moderator should

THE MODERATOR AND QUORUM OF SESSION

be careful that only routine business be attended to, and that nothing be done contrary to the known wishes of the Pastor, in whose place and name he presides. In the event of the Pastor's death, the Elders should invite another Minister of the same Presbytery to act until the Presbytery can appoint a Moderator. The one thus appointed is the only one authorized to call a meeting or to preside. If at any time it is impracticable, without great inconvenience, to secure the presence of a Minister of the same Presbytery, the Session may proceed without one, calling on one of themselves to take the Moderator's chair. In such a case, only necessary routine business should be transacted. "It is especially expedient, when the Session is constituted for judicial business, that there be a presiding Minister," because he is presumed to be better acquainted with the provisions of our Book of Discipline; and the supervision of Presbytery, through him, is more necessary than in ordinary business. There are times also "when for prudential reasons, it may appear advisable that some other Minister [than the Pastor] should be invited to preside; in which case the Pastor may, with the concurrence of the Session, invite such other Minister as they may see meet, belonging to the same Presbytery, to preside in that case."

V

THE CHURCH DISTRICTED

We held our meeting of Session, and adopted the plan proposed. Some of the older members hesitated, objecting that it might lessen the interest of the several Elders in the body of communicants, if each had a special charge of a few. They had not been accustomed to systematic visiting, and did not feel qualified or inclined to undertake it. The Pastor, however, said that experience proved that the special charge of a few communicants increased the feeling of responsibility and interest in all, and qualifications for duties could be developed only by practice. The older should encourage the new members of the Session. The plan was adopted. As far as possible the districts were arranged to include twenty or twenty-five families in each. Often they include more. This division of the communicants is sometimes made according to the nationalities in the Church, or according to the convenience or preference of the Elders. For many reasons, it was thought best that they should make it according to the residences of the communicants. Each Elder was requested to prepare a district roll book, which should contain a description of the bounds of his district; the names of the members living in it;

THE CHURCH DISTRICTED

their addresses, occupation, date of membership; connection of each communicant with organizations for church work; the number, ages, and names of all the children; the names of their teachers in the Sabbath school; their addresses if absent from home; whether they have been baptized and had professed faith; and a wide column for remarks which might be useful for further entries. Such books are in use in Scotland, and prove very helpful to Elders in their work. They can easily be prepared to suit the convenience of each church. Our visits were to be sociable yet official. We were urged to become acquainted with each communicant in our district, to ascertain as far as possible the spiritual condition of the members of each household, to report to the Superintendent the names of those not attending the Sabbath school, to the Deacons all cases of sickness and need, and to the Pastor those to whom his visits would prove of special service. We were to learn who in our districts were not attending any church or Sabbath school, and to select members of the church to help us in visiting them.

This seemed at first very formidable. But after I had prepared my book and entered upon the work, I greatly enjoyed it. All received me pleasantly, and expressed satisfaction that the Session was taking a deeper interest in them. I found three cases of real need, who had been unwilling to ask for aid. The Deacons have promptly attended to them. I reported to the Pastor the sickness of a member who had felt hurt that he had not called,

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

although she had been confined to bed for four weeks. I showed her that it was unreasonable to suppose that he could know of her sickness, when even her next door neighbor was not aware of it. My visit seemed to do her good; the Pastor will call at once.

I have become much interested in a young man. He was brought up a Roman Catholic, but while here, away from home, he has attended our services and read the Bible. He has learned that Jesus Christ alone can forgive sins, and is the only intercessor between God and man. He believes that he has been converted, and has long desired to unite with our church, but has been hindered by the opposition of his mother, and because no one of our people has spoken to him. I must tell the ushers, and some of the men and women, to make it their duty to welcome strangers to our services. His mother does not forbid him, but is grieved that he thinks of leaving the Romish Church. He has a companion who had never attended church, until induced by him to come to our services. A great change is apparent in their lives. They consented to call with me on the Pastor, who, after instructing them for some time, encouraged them to appear with others before the Session.

VI

• RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

Our Elders were much pleased and encouraged with the first results of their district visitation. Quite a number were found ready to profess their faith. Several certificates were obtained which ought to have been presented before. Our communion was approaching, and the Pastor had been for some time holding a communicants' class. The Session held a special meeting to examine candidates. It is usual for the applicants to assemble in the church and to come one by one before the Session. This gives the Elders a better opportunity to judge of their qualifications than if they should all come together. Sometimes when the candidates have been under the instruction of the Pastor, several come at the same time for examination, care being taken that important questions be put to each. This was done in the present case. The Pastor conducted the examination, inquiring as to their knowledge of the plan of salvation, their personal faith in Christ, and their ability to discern the Lord's body—that is, their understanding the spiritual character of the Sacrament. The Elders had each the opportunity to ask further questions.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

One young woman said that she had not read the Confession of Faith, and was not therefore prepared to say that she had assented to all its doctrines, and one man said he had carefully examined it, but could not accept what was taught concerning the baptism of children on the faith of their parents. Others said, that they had been brought up on the Shorter Catechism, and had found every thing in it taught in the Bible. The Pastor informed them, that while it was a great help to know and receive all contained in the Standards, it was not required that those admitted to the communion should assent to these doctrines. Belonging to the church, they must expect to be instructed in her doctrines. Our church requires for membership only what the Bible does, viz., faith in Jesus Christ, the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the only Saviour, who has accomplished our salvation by His life and death; or, as our catechism expresses it, "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel." This profession must be credible, that is, one that can be believed; of this the Session must be the judge. If it indicates no repentance for sin, no love for Christ, nor desire to keep His commandments, it is not credible. But when the faith is credible, the Session must receive the candidate, whatever may be his ignorance or doubts concerning other doctrines. The Session does not declare him to be a Christian, they cannot see the heart. They only decide that his profession of faith and repentance is credible, and there-

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

fore welcome him to the communion with other professors. Those who are thus received are to be further instructed in the truth. The doctrines which are contained in the Word of God, we believe to be those stated in the Standards of our church. The officers are required to accept these doctrines, because they are to instruct the members and to direct them in christian living and activity. This statement of the Pastor satisfied all, and the Session, on motion, approved the examinations of the applicants and received them to the communion of the church. This motion is sometimes made after the applicants have retired for a time, that the Session may consult more freely in private. The Pastor then formally announced to them the decision, and offered a prayer of thanksgiving for their conversion and voluntary consecration to Christ's service, and of petition that the Spirit would help and keep them in godly living, teaching them continually of His grace and glory. After this he, and the several Elders in turn, took each of them by the hand, welcoming him to the communion of the church. The Clerk of Session was careful to record their names in full, and the names of the husbands of the two married women. Each was informed who was the Elder of the district in which he lived.

This is sometimes, wrongly, called "uniting with the church." Most of these were members by birth, being the seed of believers. Their covenant right was recognized under the Old and New Dispensations, and in their cases was acknowledged at their baptism. As members of the church, they have a

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

right to all the privileges thereof, but they must possess certain qualifications before they can partake of them. It is their right and duty to come to the Lord's table, but they must have knowledge, personal faith and ability to discern the Lord's body, before they can be admitted. When the Session is satisfied that their profession is credible, that they possess these qualifications, they are "received into the communion of the church."

A question arose in regard to the baptism of my two young men. One had been baptized in the Romish Church in infancy, and the other did not know whether he had been baptized, nor whether either of his parents was a member of any church. The Pastor said undoubtedly this young man ought to be baptized. In regard to the other, the General Assembly, in 1845, declared that Romish baptism was invalid; but in 1875 said "that the decision of this question is left to the judgment of each church Session, guided by the principles governing the subject of baptism, as laid down in the Standards of our church." After discussion, it was decided that he also should be baptized. This was his own wish. These two young men were requested to present themselves before the congregation on the next Sabbath morning for baptism.

One of the young women who had been received, asked that she might be immersed. This caused some surprise. The Pastor said he would see her in a few days. When she had retired the Elders began to discuss the question, but were soon

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

informed, that the Elders were to decide who were to be admitted to sealing ordinances, but it was the prerogative of the Minister to determine how the Sacraments were to be administered. He had been interested while listening to our opinions. He afterward told us, that he could find no case of immersion mentioned in the New Testament, and that sprinkling was the true Scriptural form. He had a long talk with the young woman, and found that she had some Baptist friends, who had influenced her. Her preference was not the result of conviction that immersion was the proper mode. He feared at first that she desired notoriety, but she seemed rather to wish to gratify her friends. He succeeded in showing her the impropriety of going contrary to the custom of our church, which he proved to her was the Scriptural mode. She eagerly withdrew her request. He further told us, that he might in some cases consent to immerse, but it was not probable.

After all the applicants had retired, the Pastor said he had received certificates of dismissal to this church from several persons. Some of these were in regular form and with proper dates. These communicants were on motion received, and the Clerk was directed to send a certificate of reception to each church from which members are received by us; for they remain under the jurisdiction of those churches until it is certified that they have been accepted by us.

One of the certificates was regular in form and signature, but was without date. The lady assured us that she had just received it, on her application

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

sent a week ago. She was well known to the members of the Session, and had worshipped with us for some time. On motion she was received and her name added to the roll.

Another was in regular form, but dated two years ago. But as the young man had at first no settled place of residence, and during the last eighteen months was living within the bounds of our congregation and acceptably engaged in church work, it was resolved that his name be added to the roll.

Another was in the form used by the church in Scotland, which does not dismiss members to particular churches. Another had been obtained before the man had decided where to locate, but he was well known by one of the Elders as a consistent christian. It was resolved that these two be received into the communion of our church.

Another certificate was a qualified one—that is, one which stated that Mary Brown had been a member in good and regular standing until three years ago, when she married and removed from the bounds of her church; since which time the Session had not known of her residence, nor anything of her christian life, until last month she sent a request for a certificate of dismissal to unite with our church. The Pastor stated that he had written to the Minister of the Congregational Church, where she had been attending services, and he reported favorably of her consistent character and warmly recommended her as a worthy Christian. She was, therefore, on motion received.

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

A similar certificate was received from a man who had been a travelling agent for two years, and of whose conduct during that time nothing could be learned, although he made a favorable impression during the month he had been within our bounds. It was, after some discussion, decided to lay this qualified certificate on the table for two months, that the Elders might have the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with him.

Another certificate was of a member under suspension, who had sent with it a letter urging that he might be received, and stating that he was ready to express penitence for the offence mentioned in the certificate and to give proof of reformation. The Pastor had asked him why he had not sent to his own Session a written acknowledgment of his fault and a request for restoration to the communion of the church. He had replied, he thought some of the members of that Session were prejudiced against him, and as he had lived for some time in our midst he could more easily here present proofs of his reformation. The Session decided that it was not in order to receive him, as he was under the jurisdiction of the Session which had suspended him, until he was restored by that Session, and regularly dismissed as in good standing. He was recommended, therefore, to send his request for restoration to his Pastor, and if his request was refused and he considered that injustice was done, he could appeal to Presbytery. The Pastor stated that had the church been very distant, and requested our Session to assume jurisdiction, we could have re-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

ceived him, and on satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation we could have restored him, but we could not have reviewed or reopened the case.

Another certificate was from the Swedenborgians but could not be received, nor could one from a Unitarian congregation. The Pastor and one of the Elders were appointed to visit and confer with these persons on the subject of doctrine and personal religion.

Letters from two ladies in our congregation were presented, stating that they were communicants in good standing, one in an Episcopal and the other in a Baptist Church, and that they had applied for certificates to unite with our church, and had been refused on the ground that those churches were not in the habit of dismissing their members to other denominations. The Clerk of Session was desired to reply to their communications, and request them to apply for certificates of membership—which, if granted, would be accepted by our Session under the circumstances. If these were refused, they could be welcomed as members of our church on profession of faith.

A man knocked at the door, saying that he had heard the Session was holding a meeting, and he desired to be received as a communicant. He had been a member in the old country, and in coming to this country ten years ago he had received a certificate. This had, however, been lost. He had written for another, but his Pastor had died and the records of the church were very defective and his

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

name could not be found. He acknowledged his neglect of duty, and his absence from the ordinances of the church for a considerable time after he came to this country. He expressed sorrow, and stated that for the last six months he had been living a different life. Since the death of his wife, he had attended church-services and earnestly desired to be reconnected with God's people. He was unknown to the Session, although he had often been seen in church. After a full conversation with him, he was requested to renew his application at the next communion season. In the meanwhile, the Pastor and the Elders will have frequent conversations with him. If everything is then satisfactory he may be received on profession of faith. He stated he had a daughter, who was only ten years old, but of good understanding, having been carefully taught by her mother. She was anxious to unite on profession of her faith, but he had told her that she must wait several years before she would be old enough to take such a step. The Pastor replied, that the Bible did not forbid little children to come to Christ, or to confess Him before men. Age is not mentioned as a qualification of church membership. If she possessed a knowledge of the plan of salvation, and had a personal faith in Christ, and manifested that faith by love to Him and a desire to please Him, there was no reason why she should not be received; indeed it would be wrong to deny her. He would be pleased to call on her soon, and see how far prepared she was; the Elder of her district would also have

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

frequent conversations with her before the next communion.

Another man presented himself for membership. He was a communicant in a neighboring church, but he had taken offence at something the Pastor had said in a sermon, and had a difficulty with one of the Elders and some of the people. He had obtained a regular dismissal to our church, which he presented. The Session had a long talk with him, and urged him to return to his own church, seeking a reconciliation with his Pastor and members. This he refused to do, and claimed his right to be received on his regular certificate, which was in all respects in order. He then retired while we deliberated. Some thought we had no option in the case, that his certificate could not be rejected without discourtesy and offence to the church which had granted it. The Pastor, however, informed us that our Form of Government acknowledges the right of every court to decide on the qualifications of its members, and of the Session to determine who shall be admitted to its communion. This includes the duty of inquiring if the applicant's known character and conduct would be for the edification or injury of those under our care. It would be no discourtesy to the other church to acknowledge the presentation of the certificate, recognizing that it is in order, but adding that we had declined to receive him, because we did not think his admission would be for the edification of the church. This course he advised, because we all knew he had been a constant trouble in that

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

church, under two pastorates, had at present a difficulty with one of our own members, and the spirit he had manifested before the Session was not that of gentleness or peace. After a long discussion we received him on a majority vote. The Pastor expressed his apprehension that this Mr. Jones would prove an injury to the church. This is one of the very few cases in which the vote in our Session was not unanimous. When we were not prepared to agree on a measure, it was usually postponed until on further consideration all were ready to vote for it.

A communication was received from Presbytery, stating that a certain church had been dissolved, and its members (twelve in number) had been committed to our care. Their names were, therefore, added to our roll "by order of Presbytery."

Rev. Mr. Thomas applied to be received as a member. He had not been for some time in the exercise of his ministry, was engaged in secular pursuits, and did not consider himself a Minister. The Pastor was requested to inform him, that he was a member of Presbytery, and the Session could not authorize him to demit his ministry. He could not, therefore, be received by us.

Two candidates for the ministry presented certificates of dismission to unite with this church, which were in order, except that they did not indicate that their Presbyteries had been consulted, as required by the General Assembly of 1894. The candidates were referred to their Presbyteries. Their reasons for their request were, that they were

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

now living within our bounds, much nearer to the Seminary than in their former homes, and would like to engage in our church work under the guidance of our Pastor.

The Moderator also reported that he had a visit from a man who wished to be admitted to the communion, but he keeps a saloon. He declared that he was doing a legitimate business, and was very careful to observe the law in every particular, and allowed no disorder on his premises. He did not like the business, but it was his means of making a living, and he could find no other opening. The Pastor said that he had tried to show him how inconsistent this occupation was for a christian, and how much damage he was doing to his fellows. He admitted this in part, but added that it was lawful, and if he did not sell liquor, others would, and probably in a more objectionable manner. The Pastor then read to him the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1877, which has several times been reiterated—The Session of our churches are called “to guard carefully the purity of our church, by refusing to admit to membership, or to retain those within her pale, who are engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or who derive their livelihood from this sinful traffic.”

Before adjourning, the Pastor gave us directions how to assist him in the ministration of the Sacrament. The Deacons would prepare the bread and wine, and set the table. Each Elder was assigned his part and informed in what aisle he would

RECEIVING MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNION

serve. The Pastor urged us to notice the communicants who were present and partook, that we may be able to report at the next meeting of Session, which would be held on Monday evening.

I asked what kind of wine would be used. The Pastor was very clear in his conviction that there was in Scripture but one kind of wine, and that any substitute was unlawful. He had once been asked to consecrate water for a communicant who objected to taste the wine; he had replied that he had no authority to change what the Lord had ordained. "The General Assembly has always recognized the right of each church to determine what is bread and what is wine."

Elder Smith stated, that Miss Reeves in his district had been an invalid for some time, and had expressed an earnest desire to partake again of the Lord's Supper, but he did not see how she could be gratified. The Pastor said there is no difficulty in the case. He had felt a great sympathy for her, and had intended to ask her if she would not be comforted and strengthened by partaking of the Sacrament. He was glad the proposition had come from her. While avoiding all ideas connected with the extreme unction of the Romish Church, it was the privilege of those long detained from the house of God, to partake of this ordinance in private. In such cases, these things ought to be observed—The application should be made to the Session; the Pastor should be accompanied by at least one of the Elders; other communicants, at least of the family, should be present;

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

the number of persons should be restricted according to the condition of the invalid; all communicants present should partake of the elements; the service should be short, but include all the essential parts. The Pastor or Session should possess a convenient cup and platter, and take these, with some bread and wine, to the house, and bring back what may remain of the elements, that no superstitious use may be made of them; the sick or aged should be informed that there is no special significance nor efficacy in this home service beyond that which belongs to it when administered in the church. Her request was, therefore, granted. Elder Smith was appointed to make all necessary arrangements with the family, and to go with the Pastor next Sabbath afternoon—our communion Sabbath—and aid him in the administration.

VII

SESSIONAL MEETING AFTER THE COMMUNION

The next Sabbath was a beautiful day, and of great interest to me and to the whole church. The adult baptisms made a deep impression, and the Pastor's tender words of instruction and exhortation to the unusual number of new members, as they stood before the congregation, were very solemn and appropriate. These were reminded that the Session had received them as communicants, and now the members of the church by rising welcomed them into their number and pledged their love and coöperation. As all stood the Pastor pronounced a benediction upon them. The whole service was very impressive and profitable. I must admit, however, that my new position and duties during the administration of the Sacrament in a measure distracted my attention and interfered with my personal edification. The other Elders told me that mine was not an uncommon experience, but that by a prayerful care of my thoughts I would soon learn to enjoy the service more than when a private member. This is a great comfort to me.

The next evening the Session met. The prin-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

cial business was calling the roll of the communicants. The Elders were expected to answer present or absent, as the names were called, and a record was made. When one was reported absent, the Elder of his district was asked if he knew the reason of the absence. The replies were often important, revealing conditions in the families which the Pastor and Elders should know, and called for sessional action or pastoral visitation. I noticed that the Pastor made frequent notes in a memorandum book. He afterward told me that at these meetings he often heard for the first time of sickness or affliction in the families, and was informed of temptations to which he did not know his people were exposed. The Elders also took frequent notes. When a communicant was found to have been absent for three times without a proper excuse, a committee was appointed to call on him and expostulate or reprove as might be thought best. Concerning some there was serious consideration, and often helpful advice given to the Elder in charge. Thus, as the roll was called, each communicant passed in turn before the Session, reminding us of our responsibility and of their christian life and efficiency. Some were not known to all of us, some were very irregular in their attendance, and others had not been seen at our services for a long time. The case of each was carefully considered, and measures were proposed to bring them to a more consistent life. The conversation concerning the different members of the church was conducted with an earnest desire

SESSIONAL MEETING AFTER THE COMMUNION

to further the spirituality and christian activity of each. It was clearly understood that everything that was said in the meetings of Session, especially concerning the character and life of the communicants, was in strict confidence.

Mrs. Peters was found to have been absent for nearly two years, having removed to New York. The Clerk was requested to write, reminding her of her duty to identify herself with a church in that city, and warn her, if necessary, in a second letter, that if she fails to do so without a good reason, "her name will be placed on the roll of suspended members, until she shall satisfy the Session of the propriety of her restoration." (See Section 49 of the Book of Discipline.) Miss McIntire married and went West, more than three years ago, and her residence is unknown to the members of the Session. Her name was, therefore, placed on the reserved list. (See the same section.) The reasons for this action were of course recorded. She remains a member of this church, subject to its jurisdiction. It will be our duty to endeavor to ascertain her address and open communication with her. If at any time she should give reasons for her long silence, and ask for her certificate, a qualified letter will be sent to her.

One of the Elders reported that he had ascertained that Mr. Platt had about a month ago been confirmed in a Lutheran church without a dismission from our communion. It was therefore resolved, that such conduct was a disorderly renouncing of his membership in our church, and that the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

fact be recorded on the minutes and his name be erased from our roll of members.

Mrs. Watson, according to the roll, has been absent over two years. The Elder of the district in which her parents lived stated, that he had written to her, and in reply she said at the time of her marriage she had obtained her letter of dismissal, and regularly united with the Presbyterian church of Coatesville, Ky., of which she was still a member. No record of this dismissal could be found on minutes of Session or communicants' roll. These facts were ordered to be recorded, her name to be removed from the list of members, and that she be informed of this action. The explanation seems to be, that the Clerk had taken her maiden name from the roll, and, while putting her name as Mrs. Watson in its proper place, had neglected to record that soon after she had obtained her certificate.

Mr. Stuart had been notified by his Elder that he had been absent for a long time without asking for his letter. He replied that he had been dissatisfied with the way he had been treated by some members of the church, and that for some time before he moved away, he had attended the Methodist church, and did not consider himself a member of our communion. In his new home, he had lately joined a Presbyterian church on profession of faith. This was very disorderly, and the spirit manifested not christian. The facts were recorded and his name erased from our roll. It was debated, whether he was still under our jurisdiction, and if charges

SESSIONAL MEETING AFTER THE COMMUNION

should not be preferred against him; but he was in fact a member of another church, and the offence had been committed several years ago. It was then asked, if we ought not to inform the Session under whose care he now was. The Pastor thought not, unless we were prepared to follow it up, tabling charges against him. The Pastor was requested to write to him, showing wherein he had been disorderly, and giving such counsel and instruction as he might think best.

All the meetings of Session are opened and closed with prayer, but at this meeting the prayers were very earnest for the new members, and for those who by this review of the roll were found to be in special need of prayer. I understand that many Sessions do not hold this kind of meeting, but I should think it would prove very helpful to Pastor and Elders in the discharge of their duties. It reminded us of our responsibility in the oversight of all the members, as well as of those living in our own districts. This examination of the roll took considerable time, but gave me much valuable information concerning the communicants. The Pastor said that to him it was always the most helpful of Sessional meetings. He showed me a long memorandum of items, which he had gained and would use immediately. Part of the roll had to be deferred to an adjourned meeting to be held after the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting. We determined to hold regular meetings on the first Monday of each month, and that the congregation be informed of the fact, that if any one has any business

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

to bring before us, he may know when to present it, and that those desiring advice, or to be received as communicants, may apply at these regular meetings.

Before we adjourned this evening, a woman came in great distress, saying she had committed the unpardonable sin, in that she had been a communicant in our church for seven years, and had often partaken of the Lord's Supper, yet she had not been baptized. She had been received on profession of her faith under the former Pastor, who had taken it for granted that she had been baptized in infancy. She was not therefore called forward for baptism, and had been afraid to tell the Pastor of the mistake, and was ashamed to acknowledge it later, but had been more and more troubled in mind, and could bear the sin no longer. The Pastor told her there was no need of church discipline, or of action of the Session. He asked if she believed on Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, and that His blood cleanses from all sin. He told her there was no unpardonable sin, except that of rejecting Christ. The grieving the Spirit and the sin against the Holy Ghost was the final, or persistent, resisting His influence in leading to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. She was much comforted. He told her she had done wrong in fearing to speak freely to her Pastors, and continuing so long without baptism. The Session had no hesitation in admitting her to that ordinance, and she was requested to present herself for baptism next Sabbath morning. This was done.

SESSIONAL MEETING AFTER THE COMMUNION

As the next Sabbath was the usual time for baptisms, notice had been given that the Session would after the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting receive applications from parents for the baptism of their children.

VIII

INFANT BAPTISM

We met as proposed, and there were a number of parents present making application for the baptism of their children. Too often the whole responsibility is assumed by the Minister, but our Directory for Worship says, "The officers of the church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances."

In several cases both parents were members of the church, and their request was at once granted. The Clerk of Session was careful in each case to make a record of the full names of the parents, of the child, and the date of birth. The parents were each requested to have the full name of the child written on a slip of paper, to be handed with the child to the Pastor at the time of baptism, that no mistake may be made.

One mother stated that her husband is not a communicant, but the Session acknowledged her right to have her child baptized. Another, who is not a member, although her absent husband is, was told that the baptism must be postponed until he could be present and take the vows, as the child would be baptized on his faith. A man and a woman claimed the privilege on the ground that

INFANT BAPTISM

they were both baptized members. They were informed, that it was their duty to have and profess faith in Christ. While they neglected this known duty, they were depriving themselves and their children of the privileges of the church. Baptism was an act of faith, claiming the blessings of God's covenant. Those who refused to enter into this covenant, could not claim its privileges for their children nor take the vows to bring them up in the fear and nurture of God. They promised to consider their duty in this matter. A mother, a member of the Episcopal Church, asked that her child might be baptized, as there was no church of her own in the place, and she was attending regularly our services. Her husband was not a christian. Her request was granted, as she was a member of a christian church.

A husband and wife, who had just united with our church, desired to have their five children baptized. Two of these were infants, two and four years of age. The others were eight, twelve, and sixteen years. There was no hesitation in regard to the baptism of the two infants, but some of us said at once, that some of the others had reached the years of discretion, and, therefore, could not be baptized on their parents' faith. The Moderator told the parents they might retire, and he would report later the decision of the Session. He wished us to discuss the question, and silently listened to our arguments. We were divided in opinion, although most of the Elders held that the boy of sixteen and the girl of twelve ought not to be baptized

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

until they were ready to profess their own faith. The Pastor then declared that he was prepared to baptize the whole family, and he believed he had Scriptural authority for so doing. Ishmael was circumcised when he was thirteen years old, and so were "all the men of his father's house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, circumcised with him." This was on Abraham's faith. So, in the New Testament, where household baptisms are spoken of, all in the house were baptized on the faith of the head. Nothing is said of the ages of the members baptized, because it was unimportant. Some may have been infants and some slaves, it mattered not. They were all of the household, under the authority and spiritual guidance of the head, who had expressed his faith in Christ, and they were, therefore, included in the covenant blessings. These he claimed for himself and them. After some further discussion, on a majority vote, it was decided that all the children should be baptized. Some of the Elders, while believing that the Pastor was right, thought it was unusual in our church. The Pastor said that it was the privilege of believing parents to have all their children consecrated to the Lord, and that we had no right to forbid them. On the other hand, if a child should refuse to be baptized on his parents' faith, it would not be right for the parents or the church to force him to submit to the ordinance. The vote was then made unanimous.

A mother had sent a letter asking that her child

INFANT BAPTISM

might be baptized; she was not a member, and her christian husband was dead. She had to live out as a servant. Her baby was in the care of her husband's mother, who was a member of our church. Her request was granted, for while our church does not approve of god-parents, any infant may be baptized on the faith of the person who has the undisputed care and training of it. The same answer was given to another communication, asking if an adopted daughter might be baptized, and for the same reason.

A request was made by one who was under suspension. The Clerk was directed to inform him that the baptism of his children was one of the privileges of the church from which he had, for an offence, been suspended. He was urged to consider his duty to seek restoration by repentance and reformation. A similar request was made by one who, though a member, had for some time absented himself from the services and sacraments of the church. The Pastor and some of the Elders had frequently urged him to return to his duties, and to send his children to the Sabbath school and to the other services, but he still neglected to do so. His request was, therefore, denied. A man, not a communicant, was very anxious to present his child; he urged that his wife (a Baptist) was an earnest christian, and would train the child in the Scriptures and godly living. Of this we were assured, but the Session had to answer that the mother, being the believer, was the one to present the child and make the vows. If she would do so, the Pastor

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

would gladly baptize the child. I was appointed to call on him, and give this reply of the Session, and to seek to bring him to faith in Christ. A communicant sent word that his wife was a Roman Catholic, and without his approval she had taken their child to a priest, who had baptized her. He was much distressed, for he did not believe in Romish ordinances, and it had been clearly understood by his wife that their children should be brought up as Protestants, and that he was to have the full control of their religious education. The Clerk was directed to inform him that he might present the child next Sabbath.

The Moderator laid before the Session a letter from a member of our church, desiring the baptism of her illegitimate child. The facts were, that some time before the birth of the child she had made a full confession of her sin and had submitted humbly to the sentence of suspension. After the birth she personally, and of her own accord, appeared before the Session, and gave satisfactory evidence of her penitence, and had been restored to the communion. There was some hesitation on our part, although we were persuaded that she was now living a pure life. The Pastor asked, Had she not been restored to enjoyment of the privileges of the church, and was not the baptism of her child one of the privileges to which she had been restored, and was she not prepared to make and perform the vows? She could not be restored to full standing in the church, and yet be denied his right. Her request was, therefore, granted.

INFANT BAPTISM

A message was brought, asking the Pastor to go at once and baptize an infant, who was evidently dying. The parents were strangers to the members of Session. We therefore adjourned, and the Pastor requested me, as the Elder in whose district the family lived, to go with him. When we arrived, we found the parents in great distress. They evidently regarded baptism as essential to the salvation of the child. They were communicants in the Episcopal Church. Our Pastor's presence and quiet manner calmed them. He examined the child, and assured them that she was not as near her end as they had supposed. He explained that their idea of the Sacrament was superstitious and unscriptural. No rite nor outward service, performed by man, could affect the state of the soul. Christ's redemption alone could secure salvation, and it was imparted by the Spirit according to His covenant, which includes believers and their children. A child is not made a member of the church by baptism, but being by birth a member he has a right to be recognized as such by baptism. We believe that every child dying in infancy is saved, because this seems to be taught throughout Scripture, and Christ said, "It is not the will of your Father in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." They asked, "What, then, is the use of having our daughter baptized?" He answered, "It is the command of Christ, as the expression of your faith in His covenant, and of your claim that she has, by His grace, a part in its blessings, and as your consecration of her to the Lord." They replied that

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

they, for these reasons, desired to have her baptized. He gladly consented to do so. The service was solemn and comforting to all.

On our way home we met a father, who asked if his child could be baptized in private, as he did not like to stand up before the congregation. The Pastor replied that the Directory for Worship says, "It is usually to be administered in the church, in the presence of the congregation." The General Assembly has said, "There may be cases when it will be expedient to administer this ordinance in private houses; of which the Minister is to be the judge." No one ought to object thus to renew his profession of faith before men, or publicly to consecrate his child to the Lord. He could give no good reason for his request, and promised to bring his child to the church.

At the baptismal service, the parents and children assembled in the Sabbath school room, and I was there, to notify them when they should enter the church. One of the parents asked me, if her husband might stand with her; I could not answer, but said the Pastor always came in to see them before the service. He came at that moment, and replied at once there could be no objection; he greatly preferred him to be present and to take as much part in the service as he could. They must remember, however, that the child was to be baptized on the mother's faith, and that she was the one to make the vows. After the invocation, the Pastor read a few passages, setting forth the nature of baptism and the participation of the children of

INFANT BAPTISM

believers in the blessings of the covenant. I then brought in the parents. We found the senior Elder standing by the Pastor, holding the baptismal bowl. This was not merely for convenience, as many were to be baptized, but as indicating that the Elders shared with him the responsibility of this ordinance. He spoke of the significance of the water—the seal of the covenant, the birthright of the children, the obligation of parents, their claim by faith, the consecration made to God, and of the vows implied and now publicly assumed. After the parents had given audible assent, our Pastor, according to his habit, turned to the congregation and said, “The Pastor and Elders of this church, in the administration of this ordinance, recognize the right of these children as members of the church, and promise to take careful supervision of all the baptized members, to maintain the divinely appointed means of grace, and to help the parents to perform their vows to bring up these little ones in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord.” He then offered a short prayer, consecrating the water and invoking God’s presence and blessing in accepting the vows made. He took each infant in turn in his arms while he baptized it, and held the hand of the older children as they knelt to receive the sprinkling of the water. He then offered another short prayer that God would ratify what had been done in His name, and bless, to both parents and children, this act of faith. He pronounced the benediction upon them, before I led them back to the Sabbath school room. Some Ministers do not take the children in

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

their arms, and in many cases it is better that they should not, for the sake of all concerned. Yet when it can be properly done, it is more significant and appropriate.

IX

DISMISSIONS

At the next meeting of the Session there were a number of requests for dismissal. Several persons were removing from the place, and therefore applied for their letters to unite with other Presbyterian churches. They were in good standing, and their certificates were ordered to be given to them by the Clerk.

Our Pastor has often impressed upon the communicants that it was their duty to ask for letters of dismissal, whenever they changed their place of residence, and very promptly to connect themselves with the nearest Presbyterian church, and to enter at once into the active work of its members. He now reminded those dismissed, that their membership in this church continued until they were actually received by another; and that their baptized children were included in their certificates, unless a distinct notice was given, that certain of them were to continue to reside here and to remain under our supervision. Such notice was then given in regard to four children, of whom the Session will take special charge in the absence of the parents.

Some of the applications for dismissal, however,

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

required consideration. One was from a man who has been absent from the oversight of the Session for some time, and of whose conduct we had no knowledge. The Session ordered the Clerk to send him a qualified certificate; that is, one which states that he was a member in good and regular standing until 1886, when he left this town without taking his letter, and since that time the Session has had no knowledge of him. This was according to the Book of Discipline, Section 116. Another desired a certificate which he might present to any church, as he had not determined where to settle, and expected for some time to travel. The Clerk was directed to give him a "letter of credence," certifying that he is a member in good standing in our church, which will be an introduction wherever he may sojourn, and enable him to commune in any christian church. He was informed that this did not dismiss him, and that, as soon as he decided where he would make his home, he should apply for a certificate to unite with a particular church. The Book of Discipline requires that dismission shall be addressed to a particular church.

A man stated that he had married a Baptist, who was an important member of that church; he felt it to be desirable that they should attend the same church; he therefore asked for a certificate to unite with the Baptist church of this town. He was informed, that a dismission from us would not be accepted. He would be required to be rebaptized by immersion, and received on profession of faith. The Session could take no further action at present.

DISMISSIONS

Should he decide to unite with that church, we would then drop his name from our roll. His Elder was requested to show him that he would be denying his real baptism and his church membership, and his right to have his possible children baptized. The same request was made by a lady who was removing to a village in which there was only an Episcopal Church. She was told that she ought to attend its services, and could retain her membership with us, reporting regularly to us until she could unite with some nearer Presbyterian church. The Episcopalians would not accept our certificates. If at any time she determined to be confirmed in that church, she should inform us, that we might remove her name from our list of members. Persons wishing to unite with churches of denominations in correspondence with our General Assembly of course should receive regular certificates.

A man desired a letter to unite with the Methodist church of this place. For some time the Session had been troubled about certain reports, which seriously affected his christian character. They were indefinite, but generally believed. No reliable proof had been obtained and, therefore, no charges had been preferred. The Elders said that it was not right to grant him a clean letter, when we were persuaded that he was unworthy. The Pastor, however, reminded them that he had the right to demand a trial, or a letter in good standing, and we certainly were not prepared to try him. It was decided that his request be laid on the table until

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

the next meeting, and that his Elder in the meanwhile have a free conversation with him, informing him of the fact and character of these reports, and that the Session desired to give him this information before giving him a certificate. The Elder reported at the next meeting, that his conversation was very satisfactory. He had heard of the reports and had tried in vain to trace them, and was conscious that he was regarded with suspicion by the members of our church. It was for that reason he had asked for his letter. He positively denied the implied charges, but admitted that some imprudences may have given rise to them. He withdrew his request, and asked the sympathy and help of the Session to recover the confidence of the members of the church.

A member appeared before us, and asked that his name might be removed from the roll, as he had come to the sad conclusion, after prayerful consideration, that he was not a christian and, therefore, had no right to be a communicant. This caused surprise and grief to us all, for he was correct in his outward life and regular in his attendance upon all the means of grace. The Session told him that they sorrowfully sympathized in his sense of duty, but thought that he was mistaken. The Pastor and our Senior Elder were appointed to confer with him, in accordance with our Book of Discipline, Section 48: "If a communicant not chargeable with immoral conduct, inform the Session that he is fully persuaded that he has no right to come to the Lord's table, the Session shall confer

DISMISSIONS

with him on the subject, and may, should he continue of the same mind and his attendance on the other means of grace be regular, excuse him from attendance on the Lord's Supper; and, after fully satisfying themselves that his judgment is not the result of mistaken views, shall erase his name from the roll of communicants and make record of their action in the case."

One of the Deacons, about to remove from the State, desired a letter to the Presbyterian Church of Dover, as that would be the nearest to his new home. His wish was granted and the Clerk was notified that in the certificate he should state the fact and date of his ordination, and that he was still in the acceptable exercise of his office. A motion was passed, expressive of our regret in parting from him and our high appreciation of his character and official faithfulness. He will not exercise his office until chosen a Deacon by the church to which he is dismissed.

The Clerk reported that Miss Thomas had neglected the ordinances of the church for more than one year, and had been frequently visited by several members of the Session and admonished. It was, therefore, after prayerful consideration, resolved, that, according to Section 50 of the Book of Discipline, she be "suspended from the communion of the church, until she gives satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of her repentance." The Clerk was directed to inform her of this decision. We were reminded that it was still our duty to visit her, and strive to bring her to the sense of the sinfulness

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

of her conduct. It was especially important now that she should not imagine that she is free from all church restraint to follow her own devices. She is a member under discipline, the object of which is to bring her to repentance. Her name was taken from the roll which is reported to the General Assembly, and placed on that of the suspended members.

I asked whether it would be in order for the Pastor or Clerk to grant these letters of dismissal without a formal meeting of the Session? I remember that when I desired to remove to this place, I called on my Pastor and informed him of the fact, and without the least hesitation he went to his desk and made out and gave me my certificate. The Moderator replied that, according to the Book, it is the prerogative of the Session to receive and dismiss members. It should be exercised only at formal meetings. Yet in cases of necessity, or when it is impracticable to obtain a quorum, the members of Session who are present may take the responsibility, when sure that their action will be approved and adopted by the Session at the next meeting. The General Assembly of 1891 decided that it was not illegal for the Session by a formal vote to authorize the Pastor or the Clerk to issue letters of dismissal to those in good standing and report the fact for ratification at the next meeting. In all cases of the least doubt the officer should refuse to give the letter until the Session can take action. It is frequently true that the Pastor is ignorant of facts known to the Elders

DISMISSIONS

which ought to be considered before a certificate is granted, but it is the duty of the Elders to keep the Pastor well informed concerning the character and life of the communicants.

X

BAPTIZED MEMBERS

At our next monthly meeting, the Moderator called our attention to the baptized members of the church. The Clerk had, of course, carefully kept the register of baptisms, but like many other Presbyterian churches, we had no roll of baptized members. This, he said, we ought to have, and it should be arranged to record when they became and ceased to be members of the Sabbath school; when they were admitted to the communion; married; were dismissed to other churches, or died. After some conversation it was resolved, that such a roll should be kept. It will be an important aid in our oversight of the children of the church. A committee was appointed to help the Clerk in making out this roll. It was more difficult than we expected. The whole register of baptisms, as far back as we possessed them, had to be examined, and the names transferred to the new roll. Some were known to have removed and others to have died. These were so marked, but in most cases we could not obtain the dates. From the communicants' roll we learned when some were admitted to the communion. Of the older of these baptized members there were many of whom nothing was recorded

BAPTIZED MEMBERS

and nothing remembered. These, together with those of whom the committee was in doubt, were reported to the Session. Many children had come to us from other churches, some with and some without their parents. Their full names and the facts and dates of church membership by baptism were difficult to obtain. We were surprised to discover that there were a number of these baptized members, some even elderly persons, who had not professed faith. Lists of these were given to the several Elders, that they seek opportunity to converse with them on their relation to the church.

By conference, we were able to discover the residences and histories of several more, but many blanks were left unfilled. As we came further down the list, we found that quite a number of our baptized members were not attending our Sabbath school. Some never had, others had been enticed to different schools, or had ceased attending any, and were even absent from church services. This gave us great concern, but it explained why our Sabbath school is not as large as it ought to be in a church with our number of communicants. Other lists were now prepared to be given to the Superintendent, that he might appoint teachers to visit these children and their parents, to see if they cannot be reclaimed. We hope thus not only to increase our influence over our baptized members, but also encourage the teachers to engage in this kind of church work. We were pleased to find that a very large proportion of those baptized in infancy had at an early age professed faith and

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

become active in church work. God has honored His covenant more than we had imagined.

There were some who seemed to require our immediate attention. One was a young woman, whose christian mother was dead; her father had married again, and the home influences were no longer christian. She was anxious to find employment elsewhere. Her Elder was requested to speak to the Deacons, and to interest the President of our Young People's Society in her. Another girl had been led into sin and had ceased to attend the church for some time. It was thought best to ask the wife of her Elder to call on her. According to the Book of Discipline, she is "under the care of the church, and subject to its government and discipline." It is not often, however, that a baptized member is cited to appear before the Session. It is usually better to deal with such more privately and through the parents. Several of the young men were found to be under peculiar temptation, some at home and others at college. They seemed to think that they were under no responsibility to the church. The Pastor was requested to prepare a letter on the relation of the baptized members to their parents and to the church, which should be sent by the Elders to them, and a correspondence be thus opened. There were quite a number who had arrived at years of discretion. The Elders were urged in their visitations to inform them that "Children, born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church; and

BAPTIZED MEMBERS

are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." (Directory for Worship, Chapter X., Section 1.) This action afterward led to the formation of these young people into a class, which was held during the week and led by our senior Elder. And from it was drawn from time to time members for the Pastor's communicants' class, which was held a few weeks before each communion season, to prepare applicants to the Lord's table.

XI

SABBATH SCHOOLS

The relation of the Elders to the Sabbath schools had been suggested by our consideration of the baptized members, but was soon brought before the Session by the fact that on the last Sabbath the Superintendent had read his resignation to the school, and had requested the teachers and scholars to meet after the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting to elect another Superintendent. The Moderator informed us that the religious instruction of the children was under the direction of the Session. The Sabbath school was, as the General Assembly has frequently declared, under the direction of the Pastor and Session, who must supervise the whole work of the spiritual training of the young. They are charged to determine the studies, text-books, lesson-papers, helps, and hymn-books, and examine every book admitted into the library. The Sessions of all our churches had been earnestly recommended in the exercise of their right, to appoint the Superintendents, and to supervise the selection of the officers and teachers and the benevolence of the schools. The Elders were surprised to learn that this responsibility rested upon them.

The Clerk was requested to inform the Superintendent that his resignation should be sent to the Session. The members of the Session agreed to be present at the called meeting, and expressed their desire to consult the wishes of the teachers, and to show them that the responsibility of appointing the officers rested upon us. This was seen to be very important, as the efficiency of the school depends greatly upon the Superintendent.

At the meeting of teachers, Mr. Jones, who had been received into the church contrary to the advice of the Pastor, took offence at the announcement, and declared that the teachers always had the right to elect their officers, without the dictation or interference of the Pastor or Elders. He was much excited, and some of the teachers were at first inclined to follow his lead. Our Pastor very patiently explained the case, read the decisions of the General Assembly, and showed the reasons for them. Mr. Jones was soon alone, but very decided in his opposition. The teachers, in a free conversation, mentioned their individual preferences, and finally nominated Mr. Porter, and the Session afterward elected him. Mr. Jones was not satisfied, and privately talked very disrespectfully against the Pastor. The next Sabbath the new Superintendent was introduced as such to the school by the Pastor, who in an address stated the close relation between the school and the Session, and that he was Pastor of the school as well as of the church, and would hereafter be more frequently present and take an active part with the Superintendent in the manage-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

ment of the school. Certain changes were at once concerted. Mr. Porter was invited to attend our next monthly meeting of Session, when the condition of the school was carefully considered, and various suggestions were made. A regular teachers' meeting for the study of the lesson was urged, and that the Superintendent should be the leader. He pleaded that he was young, just assuming the work of the office, and was not qualified to instruct the teachers. He requested that one of the Elders be appointed, at least for a time. He was told that this would greatly lessen his influence. He should from the start undertake the full duty of his position. The Pastor and Elders would give him all the help and countenance he needed, and were ready to answer any call he might make. By careful study he would prepare himself for this and every duty. It was important that he should know the ability and views of his teachers, and determine the character of the instruction to be given to the children. In no way could he so effectively do so as in this teachers' meeting. He asked, if all the teachers should be required to attend? The Pastor replied that all should be expected to be present and take part. They should be invited and reminded that it was part of their duty as teachers. The propriety and advantages should be urged rather than the imperative obligation. Attendance, however important, ought not to be made a necessary qualification in a teacher. "You must" is very provocative of "I won't," especially when one is rendering voluntary service to the church,

SABBATH SCHOOLS

often at considerable self-sacrifice. He should also know from what sources the teachers are obtaining the information which they impart. Sometimes they very innocently use helps, highly recommended, but which are very erroneous in tendency, if not false in statement. Those published by our Board of Publication are to be recommended as interesting and sound. The Pastor urged that these should be freely used in previous study, but that, at the teachers' meeting and in the Sabbath school room, the Bible and good maps only should be permitted to be used by teachers or scholars. The Helps are now so full and abundant, that previous study and personal searching of the Scriptures are very much neglected. A glance at the paper is often solely depended on for both question and answer, and of course no interest or profit can be secured. The time usually allowed for the teaching of the lesson is yearly decreasing, so that good results are more and more difficult and rare. The Superintendent must train his teachers, and see that parents coöperate with them in securing careful home study. He can thus be more efficient than by an elaborate and varied service, and a long exposition and application of the lesson by himself, which interfere with the prerogatives of a good teacher, and cultivate an unscriptural taste for ritualistic forms of worship. If instruction is depreciated in the Sabbath school and ceremonies are depended on to attract and retain scholars, we cannot wonder that the older and more sensible scholars cannot long be interested, and that others,

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

becoming fascinated with mere forms, will wander to ritualistic churches.

He was advised to organize and direct his teachers to visit their pupils regularly, and to call on those children in the bounds of the congregation, who are not attending any school, especially those of our baptized members. He asked if the children should be induced to bring in new scholars, and if prizes should be offered. The Pastor answered, the children ought to be encouraged to engage in christian work as early as possible. They have great influence over their companions, and can often accomplish more than older persons in bringing them into the school. They should be employed not only in gathering them in, but also in visiting the absent and the sick, under proper direction. A wise Superintendent will make a prudent selection of these little visitors and guide their ministration. The plan of hiring or bribing children to do service at home or in the church is unwise and unscriptural, as well as productive of much evil. Rewards are promised to all God's people; but competitive prizes, exciting emulation and strife for superiority, are never offered in the Word of God. They appeal to motives which cannot be called christian graces. They produce improper rivalry between the schools of the different churches, children are enticed from one school to another, to the injury of all and the fostering of denominational antagonisms. Those brought in should be from families not connected with any other church or school. He expressed an earnest wish, that the churches of this place

would enter into an agreement that no child shall be admitted to any school from another, without a regular letter of dismission, similar to that by which communicants are received.

Mr. Porter was asked why so many of the scholars had dropped out of the school. He thought there were a variety of reasons. Some had been enticed away by inducements held out by other schools. There had been dissatisfaction with the officers, perhaps without real cause. The older pupils were not interested in the instruction given. There had been irregularity in the attendance of a few teachers, from sickness or in some cases from discouragement. The importance of the teachers' meeting was again urged. He was told to study their capacity and gradually place them over the classes to which they were best adapted. Such changes should be made only after full consultation with those interested. It was suggested that it might be well, before very long, to introduce the system of graded classes. The Session advised him to secure, with the counsel of the Pastor, competent teachers for advanced Bible classes of young men and women, and to recall those who considered themselves too old to attend. He was cautioned to be prudent and slow in making radical changes.

He stated that he had been troubled by the lack of attention on the part of some of the scholars, often the members of one class were distracted by what was going on in another; and asked what could be done to remove this evil. The Pastor answered, that to a degree it was unavoidable where

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

the classes were in the same room and so near together. The teachers' Bible class would tend to fit the several teachers to hold the attention of their own scholars. Their visiting them would increase their influence. He had seen a plan which proved very effectual. A class had asked permission to purchase a table for use in the school, upon this they placed their Bibles, and the teacher his maps and other illustrations of the lesson. The members leaned on the table and got their heads together, and their attention was no longer distracted. They became much more interested in each other and the lessons. Their example was at once followed by other classes, to the benefit of the school. The plan was worth trying with us, beginning with one of the classes of larger boys.

The Superintendent informed us that the library was not in good condition. Several novels and other books of injurious tendencies have found their way into it. The Session requested him to appoint a judicious committee, of which the librarian should be the vice-chairman, to make a careful examination of the whole library, and report to the Session all objectionable books and those concerning which there was any doubt. The Superintendent of course was *ex-officio* the chairman of the committee. They should make a list of books which they can recommend to be added to the library. Three Elders were appointed to coöperate with this committee, to read every book recommended, and report them for the approbation of Session. They were also to devise a plan by which necessary funds

SABBATH SCHOOLS

could be raised annually for the regular increase of the library and for the other expenses of the school, without drawing from its benevolent contributions. Other matters of administration were considered and referred to the Pastor and Superintendent.

The Pastor was requested to confer with those of the other churches in town, and suggest his plan of the dismission and reception of Sabbath school children by certificate.

Mr. Porter said that he realized that the conversion of the children should be evidently the object of the Sabbath school, and desired to know how this could be kept constantly before the teachers and scholars. The Pastor replied, that much could be done by him in the meetings for the study of the lessons, by private conversation, and by his addresses to the school, especially on the approach of the communion Sabbath. He suggested also the holding of a short prayer meeting after dismissing the school. All the teachers should remain, and the scholars should be invited. It should be distinctly understood that the object of the meeting was prayer for God's blessing on the instruction just given, in the conversion and spiritual improvement of all connected with the school. Notice should also be given, that at certain times the Superintendent and others would be ready to converse with any on personal religion.

XII

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS

At one of our meetings of Session, a committee of the Young People's Association appeared for advice. Some of their members had proposed that they should reorganize themselves as a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, that they might be in connection with similar societies and be recognized in their county and state conventions. They were divided in opinion, and desired our advice. The Moderator invited them to state fully the reasons which had been advanced on both sides. After hearing them, the Pastor voiced the opinion of the Session, saying, no objection would be made if the Association should decide to effect the change. Personally he and we prefer the Society as it now is, with some modifications, such as the appointment of committees corresponding to those of the Y. P. S. C. E., thus calling forth the activity of all the members. This training in church work is the chief recommendation of the Endeavor Society, but there is no reason why it should not be secured in Our Young People's Association, without adopting the disadvantages of the Endeavor Society. We do not like the pledge, which is made essential. A pledge is a solemn

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS

vow to God. The breaking of it is a serious sin. It should be made only when authorized by the word of God. In these societies it is often taken as a matter of form, without due consideration. Its obligation is felt to be lessened by the necessary reservations introduced. Its provisions cannot be kept in a society of much size—as “that each member shall take a real part in each meeting, and shall attend every service of the Society and of the church.” The necessary result is that the sense of the obligation of keeping promises and pledges is lessening in the church and world. This is a growing sin. Our experience leads us also to believe that this pledge often causes the women, who are usually more conscientious than men, in their endeavor to be faithful, “to occupy the time” and gradually to assume most of the activity of the Society, while the men, from courtesy or indifference, retire from the leadership in worship and activity which ought to belong to them. We believe that there should be a distinction between the male and female members. Women and girls ought not to be required to preside, pray, and exhort in promiscuous assemblies. It seems to us to be contrary to instinct and Scripture. The literature furnished, being undenominational, is frequently lacking in sound instruction, ignoring important doctrines. We doubt the real benefit of the large gatherings (of thousands) of young men and women from all parts of the land at annual conventions, which continue for several days. We believe in the importance of expressing our interest and coöperation with all parts of the

christian church. This should be done through the recognized official bodies of the several denominations, and not by these conventions, which have no ecclesiastical authority or supervision. Loyalty to our own church, proper enthusiasm, and sound instruction, we think could be better promoted by connection with "The Westminster League" and by attending the Young People's Conventions held under the direction of Presbytery. Our young people were assured of our hearty coöperation, whatever their decision may be. We would insist, however, that their Society and literature should be under the supervision of the Session, according to the direction of the General Assembly. The committee said that this was earnestly desired by all.

After they had retired, we had further discussion in regard to Young People's Societies, and how their usefulness might be increased. The Pastor said that he would arrange to be present at their meetings as often as possible, and suggested that the Elders do the same. This will keep us in sympathy with an important part of the congregation, increase our influence over them, and enable us to guide and encourage them in the church work they are so ready to undertake. The various committees could be made very helpful in furnishing trained workers in every department of church activity, and prepare some to be efficient Elders and Deacons. If the members of the Session keep in touch with them, there need be no apprehension that these Societies may take the place of, or interfere with, other organizations of the church. Junior Societies

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS

should also be encouraged, and be brought into close relation to the Sabbath school, that as early as possible the children may feel the duty of professing faith, and engaging in some christian work. Activity and zeal which lack early development and training are usually wanting in important elements of efficiency. That which is begun in childhood is seldom lost in later years.

The Pastor said that while he did not approve of women speaking or praying in mixed assemblies, he considered it very important that in every church there should be prayer meetings for women only, and under their own control. The Pastor would have supervision of these, as of all other services, and should visit them occasionally. The Elders also might be invited sometimes to speak to them on certain subjects. It is profitable in some places to have girls' meetings for prayer under proper leadership.

Our senior Elder asked about Women's Temperance Unions. The Pastor said that these should receive full encouragement from the Session. When conducted on gospel principles, they do much good to a class of people in great need of sympathy and help. The several departments of their work should receive due, if not equal attention. It is important to excite and direct public opinion on this great subject. Public meetings addressed by men; women's conventions for consultation and mutual encouragement; articles in the papers; tract distribution; and other means are very important and helpful. But the real work of these

Societies should be found in private and united prayer; seeing that true principles of temperance are taught in the Sabbath and day schools; in discouraging all drinking customs and associations; in seeking out and guarding the tempted; in securing the execution of existing temperance laws; in alleviating the sufferings of the families of drunkards; and in laboring with great patience and faith to reclaim the fallen. None of these ought to be neglected. The Pastor said that as Chairman of the Presbytery's Committee on Temperance, he had been much saddened by the reports he received from the several Temperance Societies of the churches. They all spoke of state, county, town, and church conventions held; speeches delivered by members, distinguished orators, and reformed drunkards; but very seldom was reported any personal effort to reclaim the inebriate, except perhaps by raising money to send him to some institution for treatment. Temperate people are naturally indignant at the selfish folly of the inebriate's sin, and at the terrible privations and sufferings which he brings on his wife and children. They do not understand the influence of associations, nor the fierce hankering for liquor when the appetite is once excited; they do not appreciate the vain efforts made at self-reformation; and are inclined to think that he is an inveterate sinner, unwilling to be reclaimed, and not fit to be saved. The gospel is often regarded as inefficacious in such a case, and his death is sometimes considered a relief and a blessing to all. A true Temperance Society will have less public

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATIONS

speaking, and much more personal private labor for the prevention and cure of drunkenness, accompanied with constant prayer. Appeals to manliness, the will power, self and family interests, the efficacy of pledges, and other arguments often used, are based on the false idea that human ability can resist or overcome this sin (and, therefore, every other sin), which is contrary to Scripture and all experience. The gospel of Christ and the power of the Spirit are the divinely appointed means, and the only effective ones for deliverance from temptation and sin. Reformation without conversion can never be relied on. Temperance people should be reminded, that the use of liquor is not the only sin, nor the cause of all sins, and that a reformed drunkard is not necessarily a saint, able to resist all temptations and sins.

I asked the Pastor what he thought of the "Circles of King's Daughters." He said that he valued them very highly. In his former charge, there were two Circles, under the leadership of superior women, who knew how to interest the girls and teach them to look out for opportunities for doing something "in His name." They had significant mottoes, and lived up to their meaning: "The Always Ready Circle," and "The Thought and Action Circle." They were his efficient helpers. He frequently called on them for different kinds of church service, and found them ever willing to do anything for him and the church. He was often surprised to discover their ministrations of love to the sick and infirm. He would be glad to have

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

such Circles in this parish. We ought to have also "Mission Bands" for our young people. It is not, however, well to start too many plans at once. Success depends upon really qualified leaders; these must be first secured and trained in existing organizations. When we do adopt them, care must be taken that our young people be divided among them. They all ought to be engaged in work, but some restriction must be made as to the number of societies to which each may belong. The selection should be according to the preference and circumstances of each. A transfer from one to another should be only after conference with the Presidents of the organizations involved, and for sufficient reasons. Very often young people in their zeal, undertake more than they can properly attend to. This is very injurious to them physically and spiritually, as well as to the work. This must be prevented.

One of the Elders spoke of "the Boys' Brigade." The Pastor said that a number of Ministers had introduced it, and were delighted with the results, in holding and training the young men. He had not done so, because it seemed to him to be out of harmony with the character of the church of Christ and the spirit of the Gospel of peace, in the motives appealed to, and the methods of work. Military promptness in obedience is important, but intelligent and free-will service is more acceptable to Christ and His church, and alike profitable to him who does the service, and to those for whose benefit that service is rendered.

XIII

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

The Pastor reported that he had received appeals from the Board of Foreign Missions, stating the present embarrassed condition of the treasury, and asking if our people could not come to their aid. This brought up the benevolence of the church, which had for some time troubled our Pastor. Our collections were irregular, not in proportion to our ability, and for only some of the Boards. He found that special sermons on proportional giving, and short appeals made before the collections were taken, accomplished very little. The regular, old-fashioned Monthly Concert for Prayer for Missions was poorly attended, and excited but little interest. After a long discussion, it was decided to abolish the Monthly Concert for Prayer, and that other methods be adopted.

Giving is a duty, but it ought to be intelligent. Christian giving should be prompted by love to Christ and an interest in the several causes. This can be secured only by regular information of Christ's commission to His church, of what the Spirit is accomplishing, and the effect of His operations at home and abroad. Until interest has been excited, "The Church at Home and Abroad," "The

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Assembly Herald," and other missionary papers, however excellent, will not be read, as they should be. The Session therefore agreed, that special efforts be made to excite an interest in the benevolent work of the church. The Pastor offered to preach a few sermons on the duty of every member to take part in the extension of Christ's cause beyond the bounds of our own congregation, and on the relation and the comparative importance of the various objects recommended by the General Assembly. It was resolved that at appointed times collections be taken for each and all these causes, that the Elders be divided into committees to take special charge of the interests of the several causes, to obtain and distribute information, to devise means to increase interest, and to get into communication with the corresponding committees of Presbytery.

The committees on Home and on Foreign Missions were each recommended to form Missionary Circles, with proper officers, who shall hold regular monthly meetings, and be placed in communication with the Women's Boards of our church. They will thus be furnished with papers, directing them how to effect and carry on their organizations, and informing them of the present state of the work in the different fields. The members of these Circles will become more interested in the knowledge they obtain themselves, than that which is given by some leader. It was suggested that the members of these Circles should severally take, either permanently or for a time, different missionary stations, and in

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

turn give to the Circle its history, needs, and work. The male and female communicants should all be encouraged to unite with one or the other of these Circles. After a while some of the members may be found qualified to organize Junior Mission Bands of the younger communicants and the pupils in the Sabbath school, and early get them identified with mission work. By these means the whole congregation ought to become interested in benevolent operations, and our contributions will then greatly increase. These meetings will more than take the place of the Monthly Concert for Prayer. In the present emergency of the Board of Foreign Missions, the Pastor was asked to state the facts to the congregation and make a special appeal in its behalf.

It was suggested that hereafter, when one is received into the communion of our church, he be asked with which organization for church work he prefers to be identified.

I was appointed to obtain sample copies of "The Church at Home and Abroad" and of "The Assembly Herald," and with the help of some of the young people to endeavor to procure subscribers. Every household should be supplied with these important publications, as well as with a Presbyterian weekly paper.

An Elder asked, if it would not greatly increase the interest in missions if the members of these Circles should open a personal correspondence with some one or more of the missionaries in the field. The Moderator replied, "Certainly, but it would be

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

an additional tax on the time of the missionaries, and it would probably contract our own sympathies and contributions to the special fields of those missionaries." The Boards constantly furnish letters from individual missionaries in all parts of the world. These are in many respects better than regular personal letters. The Board does not recommend it, yet would consent to assign a missionary to the church, which is willing to assume his entire support. In that case, there would be a regular correspondence between the Missionary and the church. Arrangements may also be made to have visits from returned missionaries, which will prove very instructive, and give us a better idea of the work, and the manner in which it is accomplished. A detailed knowledge of one field will teach much of all others, yet if our interest be concentrated on one, we would exaggerate its relative importance, and lose interest in the general work of the church.

The question whether other collections, than those recommended by the General Assembly, should be allowed, was left to be decided by the Session, when the occasion should arise.

Elder Smith asked, if something could not be done to improve our method of collecting our missionary funds. He did not know who had charge of them, nor how much was received, until the annual report was read. The Pastor said he was glad the question had been raised. He had long felt our whole system was wrong. When he came, he naturally adopted the methods of his predeces-

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

sor. He had made short appeals from the pulpit when the collections were to be made, and after the service he had taken the money from the plates, and at the manse he counted and recorded the amount, and presently sent his check to the Board. He knew the people had confidence in him. But he felt that any evil disposed person might, at any time, call in question his honesty, and he would have no means to prove his innocence. He wished at once to be relieved. The care of benevolent funds of the church did not belong to the Trustees, nor to the Deacons, but to the Session. He therefore proposed that an Elder be now elected the Treasurer of the Session, and that he shall have charge of all the benevolent funds, however collected, and of other moneys raised for Sessional work; that two other Elders be appointed auditors, one of whom shall always be present when the Treasurer receives and counts the collections. They shall, every six months, audit the book of the Treasurer, examining the vouchers, etc., and report to Session. One week after a collection has been received, the amount shall be made known by the Pastor to the congregation. It was recommended that proper cards be furnished to the people on the Sabbath of a collection, that those, who are not prepared with money, may write on these cards their names and the amount they wish to contribute. The Treasurer will, in a few days, call on them. This plan ought to increase the interest of the congregation in our benevolent causes, and give confidence that everything is conducted on

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

strict business principles. This of itself should induce our people to contribute more liberally.

The Pastor said, his brother has lately adopted a plan which has in a short time doubled the contributions of his people. He has placed a letter-box in the vestibule of the church, with a card over it giving the name of the Board to which the month's contribution will be sent. Each Sabbath he calls attention to the box, and says a few words about the Board, and after the service the Treasurer and Auditors remove and count the money. A neighboring Pastor has cards on which the duty of contributing annually to all the Boards is clearly set forth. A list of these is arranged with blanks to be filled with the sums which are promised to be contributed. The cards are distributed among the communicants, who are requested to fill the blanks and sign the cards and return them to the Treasurer. Another constantly urges his people to give freely to the Boards, and collections are regularly taken. At the end of every three months the amount received is, by the Session, divided among the several Boards according to the ratio suggested by the General Assembly.

The chairman of the Presbytery's Committee on Systematic Benevolence recommended in his last report, *First*, That every church should give to every Board; *Second*, That every communicant should give to every Board; and, *Third*, That every one should give a definite proportion of his income to the Lord. The Pastor said that he had frequently urged these simple and scriptural principles.

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

In addition to the collections in the church and the missionary societies, the Session arranged for regular contributions to the Deacons' fund. It was thought best to follow the usual custom of devoting the collection taken at the Communion service to this object, and the Pastor was requested to remind the congregation that the collection would be for the poor of the church, and the Deacons were asked to prepare, when necessary, a short statement of the condition and needs of the fund, for the Pastor to read from the pulpit. Usually the expense of the communion is taken out of this collection, but in some churches it is met by a draft on the Sessional treasury, and in others by a special collection at the preparatory service. The objection to the last plan is that it diverts attention from the spiritual significance of the Sacrament, to the mere cost of the bread and wine.

One of the Elders moved that a Sewing Society be formed to prepare garments and other comforts for our Home Missionaries. This was seconded by the Elder, who has charge of the interests of the Board of Freedmen, making an amendment that some of the boxes be sent to the schools and colleges in the South for the colored people, and to Lincoln University, Pa. He further urged that religious books be included. He spoke of the needs of these students and their diligence in study. Other amendments were made by the Elders in charge of the other Boards. It was finally agreed that the various organizations in the church be recommended to form a Sewing Society,

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

to be composed of the ladies of the congregation, who shall determine to whom missionary boxes shall be sent; that the Elders, representing our different Boards, shall be permitted in turn to be present and plead their causes, and to suggest such books to be read, while the ladies are at work, as they may deem profitable.

It was proposed, that after the Missionary Bands for the children are started, that a similar society for girls should be formed under a competent leader, who shall teach the children to sew, and interest them in working for others and in the various missionary stations at home and abroad. The boys should not be excluded. They should be taught to gather information, and to present it in an attractive manner to the girls, while at work.

XIV

THE TRUSTEES

A distinguished lecturer is in town, and has applied to the Board of Trustees for the use of our church on Friday evening for his lecture. The Trustees have consented to let him have it, as we have no service that evening. The Pastor informed us, that he was troubled about it. He had no objection to the man, and he was assured that the lecture would be instructive and interesting. But he did not think that the church should be used for anything, except the worship of God, which includes, of course, religious instruction. His most serious objection was, that the Trustees had transcended their powers, and assumed the prerogative of the Session. The principle involved was an important one. The relative duties of the Trustees and the Session ought to be clearly understood, that there may be full coöperation between the two bodies. Many of the powers of the Trustees are determined by the charter and the laws of the State. These differ in different localities, and must be known and carefully observed, for the right to the property may be involved. But there are certain facts, which are very generally recognized. A Trustee is one to whom property, not his own, is committed

in trust, to hold for the owner's use and benefit. Trustees of church property cannot determine when or how it is to be used. They must keep it in good repair and condition for church purposes, which shall be determined by those authorized to conduct the services. So our General Assembly in 1863 declared "the custody and care of the property pertains to them [the Trustees] for the uses and purposes, for which they hold the trust. These uses and purposes are the worship of God, and the employment of such other means of spiritual improvement as may be consistent with the Scriptures, and according to the order of the church; . . . By the constitution of the church, the Session is charged with the supervision of the spiritual interests of the congregation; and this includes the right to direct and control the use of the building for the purposes of worship, as required or established by the special usage of the particular church, or 'The Directory for Worship.' . . . The Session is the organ or agent, through whom the Trustees are informed how and when the church building is to be occupied, and the Trustees have no right to refuse compliance with the action of the Session in this regard." This has been several times reiterated. The Supreme Court of the United States in 1872, decided "that by the acknowledged rules of the Presbyterian Church, the trustees are the mere nominal title holders and custodians of the church property. . . . That in the use of the property for all religious services or ecclesiastical purposes the Trustees are under the control of the

THE TRUSTEES

church Session. That by the constitution of all Presbyterian churches, the Session, which is the governing body in each, is composed of the Ruling Elders and Pastors. . . . The Trustees are subject in their official relation to the property, to the control of the Session of the church."

This being the case, our Trustees had no right to grant the use of the church building to the lecturer. They should have referred him to us. It was therefore proposed that the Trustees and the lecturer be informed, that the agreement must be cancelled, as the building could not be used for secular purposes and the personal profit of an individual. The Elders were ready to pass such a resolution, and thought this an effective method of preserving the sanctity of the building, and of showing the Trustees the extent and limits of their authority. The Pastor advised a different method, which was finally adopted, that no action be taken in this case. The character of the man and of his lecture being good, no real harm will be done. Any opposition or protest on our part, at this late date, would cause excitement, give unnecessary offence to the Trustees, and make a public issue between the two bodies of officers, where perfect harmony has been and should continue to be. It might also lead to much misunderstanding and trouble in the church. It was decided, that after the lecture had been delivered, the Session should invite the Trustees to meet with us for consultation, at which meeting the whole matter of our relative duties should be fraternally considered.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

We desire to inquire of them, whether they can make some change in lighting the audience and lecture rooms of the church. Our evening services are depressing, because of insufficient light. The present oil lamps are old and out of order, and the electric lights have lately been introduced into the town. The contrast between the streets, stores, and taverns, all brilliantly illuminated, and our church, so dimly lighted that we can hardly read, is greatly against our comfort and efficiency. If they can thus relieve us, it may be wise at the same time to introduce the electric lights into the Sabbath school rooms, and the ladies' parlor.

There is another matter which we should consider with them. Chapter xxii., section 3, of the Form of Government says, "In order, as far as possible, to procure a respectable and full delegation of all our judicatories, it is proper that the expenses of Ministers and Elders, in their attendance on these judicatories, be defrayed by the bodies which they respectively represent." We have learned that our Pastor has been in the habit of defraying his expenses to the meetings of Presbytery and Synod, and that the Elder goes, if he feels able to pay his own way. This is not right, and, with the loss of time at business or work, becomes a heavy burden to some. It is a question, whether these travelling expenses should be paid out of the Sessional fund in the hands of our Treasurer, or out of the Trustees' congregational moneys. This must be determined in conference. We hope the Trustees will offer to pay them,

as our fund is small and there are many demands on it.

The question was asked in regard to the payment of the Pastor's salary. He reluctantly replied, that it was not paid promptly, and that sometimes he was put to some inconvenience. The income of the church was sufficient to meet all the expenses. But the manner of collecting the funds was faulty, and hardly business-like. This led to a discussion of the proper manner of conducting church finances. Our own was the now popular one, the envelope system, against which our Pastor had serious objections, some of which had become apparent in the congregation. Its claim to be the scriptural plan, is based upon a wrong interpretation of a few passages, which referred, not to the support of the local church, but to the relief of the poor, and the extension of the gospel in other parts. Indeed, nothing is said in the New Testament of any system for the local church, save that those who ministered in spiritual things have a right to reap of carnal things, as it was ordained in the Old Testament. The way in which this was to be done was not determined, but left to each congregation, according to its peculiar circumstances. In this envelope system, the accounts of the Treasurer are very complicated, and demand of him a great deal of time and trouble, and there can be no real auditing of his receipts. Many persons find it very inconvenient to obtain the exact change for each Sabbath's envelope. Although some may find it easier to pay thus in small sums, it is not so with many.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

It is indeed provided that every one may pay at such times as he may see fit, but the efficiency of the system depends much upon all carrying out its details of regular contributions. The fact, that the more wealthy do not use the weekly envelope, discourages others. The secrecy maintained does, perhaps, no harm to the conscientious, but is found to encourage meanness in others. The whole system is based upon a Congregational principle, individualism. Personal responsibility and habits in giving should be emphasized in Presbyterian churches in connection with the family relation. This is ignored by an essential part of the envelope plan, the free pew system, which is pressed on the plea that the poor and the stranger will much more be inclined to enter a church when the pews are declared to be free. This may, perhaps, be true in some places, but the Pastor stated that his father, after long experience in the pastorate, was convinced that outsiders could not be thus attracted. Advertisements of free pews, open doors, and smiling ushers with outstretched hands will not attract them. They must be sought in the streets and lanes, in the highways and hedges, and personally invited, "compelled" to come in. When the reply is made, "Your pews are not free," it is an excuse and not the real reason. The stranger feels he is welcomed, when greeted with, "Come, sit in my pew," or "Mr. Smith will be pleased to see you in his pew," rather than when you say, "These pews are all free; sit where you please." In the Old and New Testaments emphasis is laid upon the

family relation. Households ought to appear as such, in the house of God. Parents and children should sit together, and have in that church a joint possession, which increases as generations come and go. The family pew ought not to be discarded.

There is a modification of this plan, in which, while the pews are said to be free (because no rent or charge is made for them), to each family a pew is assigned, according to preference or size, and irrespective of its ability to pay much or little. And that pew is secured to it as long as the family may desire to retain it. The family is asked, how much, if anything, it is willing to contribute, and envelopes are furnished. This is better. The poor is not hampered in obtaining a pew in a good position and sufficiently large for his family. But this does not fully meet the idea of a family pew.

The plan of an annual sale or rent of the pews, by auction, has been in some places adopted, but is inconsistent with the principles of the Gospel, and is the fruitful source of trouble, wherever it has been introduced.

The ideal plan, and that which has the most Scriptural authority, is the tithe system. The Priests and the Levites under the Old Dispensation were undoubtedly supported in part by the tithes of the people. The New Testament seems to endorse it, while it insists more upon the voluntary offerings of christians moved by the love of Christ and for their brethren in the Lord. The community of goods spoken of in the Acts was not communism. Possessions, whether sold or unsold, were still in

the power of the owners, to be given or withheld as they pleased. In love to Christ and the brethren, all property was regarded as held for the good of all, and distribution was made as every man had need. Could christians be prompted to consecrate the tenth of their income to the Lord, dividing it as each man saw fit to the support of his own church and the various benevolent objects, there would be no trouble with church finances, and our Boards would have all that they need to carry on their important operations. Our Pastor and Session determined to aim at this by urging, publicly, privately, and by example, the duty and privilege of each to set apart a certain proportion (to be determined by each for himself) of his income to the Lord's service. It was suggested that those agreeing to do so should inform the Pastor of the fact; that their number may encourage others to follow their example.

It was resolved, that at the conference with the Trustees, this matter be considered, and that they be urged to make some modification in their methods, and that we suggest that whatever plan be adopted, that these ideas be included:

1. The family shall be clearly recognized.
2. The permanent standing and participation in the house and worship of God of each household shall be secured.
3. There shall be set times for the payment of church dues, and receipts shall be always given for the same.
4. All salaries and bills shall be promptly paid.

THE TRUSTEES

5. Pews near the pulpit shall be assigned to the teachers and pupils of the Academy of this place.

6. Pews in different parts of the church shall be reserved for the use of strangers, but shall not be so marked.

The development and adoption of such a plan must be left to the Board of Trustees.

Another matter that should be considered at the conference is the music, including the choir. It is a delicate subject, and often causes trouble. Whatever is done must be attempted with prudence, and in a christian spirit. At present the leader, organist, and the other members of the choir are selected and engaged by the Trustees, and they are artistically very good, but they have no other connection with the church. Fortunately they behave with propriety and give satisfaction. The Pastor informed us, that a short time ago he had been obliged to tell the Trustees, that the choir, sitting behind him, had annoyed him and the congregation, by unnecessary whispering and moving about, and once or twice by levity. They had corrected the evil. But he said that the whole plan was wrong. The church music was not for the amusement of the people, nor a means to attract strangers, although often so regarded. The church should not be desecrated into a concert-hall. Those who might come to hear music will go where they can find the most secular music, and the least evangelical preaching. This had been his observation in several places. Church music is an aid in the worship of God, and therefore it must be under the direction of the Ses-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

sion. Those who lead in this part of public worship should be as certainly christians as those who lead in the prayers and in the preaching of the word. Otherwise it becomes a mockery. All connected with the choir should be earnest christians. He told us that his father had one Sabbath preached in a church where the leader of the choir was an opera singer, and always chose the hymns to suit the classical music he had selected for the service; and, during the preaching, he with the other members of the choir retired to a beer saloon, and returned to lead in the closing hymn. The General Assembly has declared that the music of the church is under the care and direction of the Session. The choice of the members of the choir, the books, music, and instruments to be used must be determined by the Session. Those who lead in singing should be, as far as practicable, only "those who are communicants in the church, and amenable to its jurisdiction." "The introduction of choirs or musical instruments can be justified only as they serve this end (to inspire and express devotion) and aid or accompany sacred song; and no display of artistic skill, no delicacy of vocal training, no measure of musical ability, compensates for the violation, or even neglect, of the proprieties of divine worship."

The Elders were surprised to learn that our responsibility extended to the music. The Pastor charged us to undertake it with prudence, and to remember that the Trustees had also a part in this work, being in charge of the finances of the congre-

THE TRUSTEES

gation. Funds were needed to secure proper music. It was therefore resolved, that at the proposed conference, the above facts be stated by the Pastor, and that our mutual responsibilities in this matter be clearly understood. It was known that some of the Elders had very little knowledge of music. It was determined to appoint a committee of Elders, on the music of the church, including that of the Sabbath schools and prayer meeting services. This Committee shall be in constant conference with the Pastor, and who, under the direction of the Session, shall attend to this matter. I am glad that I am not on that committee. At the conference with the Trustees, it was decided to inquire of them concerning these points:

1. When do the present contracts with the members of the choir expire?
2. How much does the Board of Trustees appropriate annually for the music, and can they continue this amount for the coming year?
3. Could means be procured for the purchase of a pipe organ, to take the place of the melodeon now in use in the church?
4. Would it be practicable to secure a voluntary choir from our own communicants, if a proper teacher or leader was provided?
5. Would it be expedient to engage a christian instructor at once to form a singing class from which we may hereafter choose members for the choirs, the church, Sabbath schools, and other services?
6. Whether it can be arranged to introduce the new Hymnal lately published by the Board of Publication? (The hymn book, we now have, has not been authorized by the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

General Assembly.) 7. If a new hymn book be introduced, should the books be owned by the church, or should they be purchased and owned by individuals? Each plan has its advantages, but it seems to us, that the church ought at least to supply all the unoccupied pews with Bibles and hymn books.

The necessity of increasing the accommodations for the Sabbath school is becoming more apparent. The changes lately introduced, and the visitation of the Elders, have brought in a number of new scholars. Our rooms are now full, and more classes ought to be formed. Indeed, one is now held in the gallery of the church. One of the Elders asked, if it would not be well to build on the adjoining lot, which is owned by the church, an addition which could meet the wants of the school, and furnish reading-rooms and parlors in which young men could be entertained and instructed during the week, instead of being enticed into places of temptation and vice. The Pastor replied that he had long desired an enlarged accommodation for the school, and proper rooms for the purpose mentioned. He thought perhaps, if the new building could be erected, the present schoolroom could be made into the needed reading-room and parlors for the young men. But the erection of buildings and changes in them were not Sessional work. It was, indeed, our province to inform the Trustees what accommodations and changes we desired, and we could do so at the proposed conference. Should they agree with us, they should devise a

THE TRUSTEES

plan by which the required funds could be raised, and call a meeting of the congregation to authorize them to undertake the work. A committee would then probably be raised to collect funds, and another to attend to the procuring of proper plans for the building. On this last committee one or more of the Session, with the Pastor and the Superintendent, as well as some of the Trustees should be placed. It was resolved that this matter also be referred to the consideration of the Trustees.

As there are so many subjects of importance, in which the responsibilities of the Session and those of the Trustees are involved, it was decided to propose, that there shall be regular meetings for conference between the two bodies, as often as once in two months. This will increase the mutual understanding of our relative duties, prevent friction, and secure coöperation and increased efficiency.

The Pastor had promised the Trustees to speak to the Session in regard to collections. Those for the Boards are ordered by the General Assembly, and are under the direction and care of the Session. This is clearly understood. But the Trustees depend partly on the Sabbath collections for the income of the church, and fear that this will decrease if collections are taken for all the Boards. The Pastor had expressed his conviction that the more the people did for others, the more they will do for their own church. He believed, too, that if the plan of proportional giving be introduced, and a better method of collecting the revenue adopted, the income would be greatly increased. They had

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

also told him, that they were often asked that collections might be taken in the congregation, either publicly or privately, for special objects. Many of these were very worthy, and appealed strongly to their feelings. It was often hard to refuse, and they were frequently perplexed to know how to grant the request. He had replied, that all the benevolence of the congregation was under the direction of the Session, which alone could order collections to be taken. Many of these touching appeals ought to be referred to the appropriate Board of our church. To his certain knowledge, money had been collected in our congregation for objects which had been carefully examined by the officers of the Boards, and either received the needed help, or been found unworthy of the money demanded. The Session were in a position to ascertain the facts, and to encourage the worthy causes. Of course every one is free to contribute or not to any cause, and the Session has no right to dictate. But it would be wise in our people to seek the information which the Session is ready to impart, before answering these appeals.

XV

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The conference with the Trustees gave great satisfaction and was productive of important results. We found them ready to coöperate with us in carrying out the suggestions we made. At that joint meeting the President of the Board of Trustees said that they had found it difficult to obtain a proper congregational meeting to hear the annual reports and to elect Trustees. Often very few were present who were not members of the Board. When others were urged to come they would answer, there is no necessity, everything is right, we have perfect confidence in the Trustees, and do not desire any change. It is, of course, pleasant to have the confidence of the congregation, but the Trustees, who bear heavy responsibilities, and give much time and labor to the church without compensation, should have the expressed sympathy of the people, and their approval of the management of the trust. And on the other hand, the people ought to keep themselves informed of the condition and care of their property. The Pastor said he most fully agreed with all that had been said, and it applied also to the benevolent funds, which were in charge of the Session, and to the operations of the various societies of the church. He informed

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

us, that in several churches in our Presbytery an annual meeting was held and well attended, at which the yearly reports of all the finances and the activities of the congregation were read, and this was followed by a social entertainment. It has proved to be very enjoyable and profitable. The chairman asked, how could the Board conduct its business in such a meeting, when the charter required that only male adults, contributing to the support of the church, can take part. The Pastor replied that the charter did not forbid the presence of others. All would be interested in hearing the reports, they could remain spectators while the legal voters nominated and elected the officers, and transacted any other business which was necessary to be done. It is usual at such a meeting, however, to attend to that only which the charter requires to be performed. All other business, especially that which requires deliberation, could be deferred to the next meeting of the Board. A more serious difficulty is the time specified in the charter, the first Tuesday of February, whereas our ecclesiastical year closes on the first day of April, which is fixed by the fact that the reports of the church and the Boards must be then prepared for the General Assembly, which meets in May. It was therefore agreed that at the next meeting of the congregation, the Trustees should ask for authority and direction to apply to the Legislature for a change in the charter, that it may read, "The annual meeting shall be held on the first Tuesday in April." The Pastor suggested another change to be made which he

THE ANNUAL MEETING

considered of even more importance. The privilege of voting should not be restricted to adult males who contribute, but ought to be extended to all the communicants in good standing, of whatever age or sex, and whether they are able to contribute or not. All are equally interested in the care of the property, and ought to have a voice in the choice of those who are to manage it. If one has discretion enough to become a member in full standing, he ought to be qualified with intelligence and moral principle to vote for Trustees. This is one of the privileges of communicants from which the General Assembly declared, in 1866, none can be excluded without a decision of the church Session, in which all such power is vested. This would entitle women to vote, as in meetings called by the Session. If they can, by our polity, vote for Elders and Deacons to manage the spiritual interests, their ability to elect Trustees to take charge of temporal affairs should not be questioned. The President of the Board of Trustees said he would gladly ask for authority to apply for this change also in the charter.

At our next meeting of Session the above recommendations were approved. After various suggestions, it was resolved, that hereafter an annual meeting of the church and congregation shall be held on the first Tuesday of April, to be called by the Session and the Board of Trustees.

As the necessary change in the charter cannot be obtained for some time, the Trustees were requested to arrange that next February, after the election of

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

officers and the transaction of the business required by the charter, the meeting should adjourn to meet on the first Tuesday of April. At the annual meetings of the church and congregation, the Pastor and the President of the Board of Trustees shall preside in turn. The children of the Sabbath schools shall be specially invited. The Elders were requested to notify all the organizations in the church, to prepare short written reports of their finances and operations, and have them ready for this annual meeting. They should contain a history of the past year, and such suggestions as may be thought needful for greater efficiency. The Clerk of Session shall give a brief summary of our actions, so far as may be for edification. The Elders shall present an account of the condition of their several districts, and the number of visits paid. The Pastor will give an enumeration of his ministerial services, the result of his supervision of the whole congregation, and such criticisms and recommendations as he may desire. The Superintendent's report should include those of the Treasurer and Librarian of the Sabbath schools. The Young People's Association, each of the Missionary and Temperance Societies, and every other organization should have similar reports. Thus the condition and activity of the whole church will be presented, and plans for greater usefulness for another year can be proposed. It shall be the duty of the Elders to see that these reports are prepared on time, and that proper persons are appointed to read them, in case the officers should prefer not to appear in person. Ladies

THE ANNUAL MEETING

chosen by the different organizations should be appointed to provide a simple entertainment, consisting of cake and tea or coffee, to which they may invite the congregation after the adjournment of the meeting, that an hour may be spent in social intercourse, and in becoming better acquainted with each other. The enjoyment and profit of such a meeting can hardly be overestimated. Those congregations which have tried them, would not forego them. There will be no difficulty in inducing people to attend. They need and desire the information thus imparted. Their interest in christian work and their loyalty to the church and the officers will be greatly increased.

The subject of annual excursions and picnics was introduced, and certain disorders and complaints connected with our last were considered. One of the Elders said that some of the children were disturbed by a report that during the coming year there would be no excursion. The cause of the late troubles was the want of proper organization. In every gathering there must be a recognized authority, which must be capable of enforcing obedience. The teachers were requested to reconsider their decision to omit the usual festival, and to see if the advantages (and they are many and important) cannot be secured without the evils which so often accompany them. It will involve much labor and self-denial on the teachers and others, but these are always willingly borne for the benefit of the school and church. Should the teachers consent to do so, it was proposed that the Superintendent be the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

officer in charge, and that he shall see that committees be appointed on the time and place of the picnic, on the means of transportation, on games and other amusements, on the provisions and serving, on order and direction, and on other matters. The chairman of each committee, with the Superintendent, should be a council to decide all questions, and to prevent and correct all abuses. Each teacher should have a special care of his own pupils. The Pastor should inform the scholars of these regulations, and that those wishing to take friends with them, must obtain permission from the Superintendent and be accountable for their conduct, that we may not again be annoyed by disorderly outsiders. Those members of the school and congregation who are not willing to submit cheerfully to authority are neither invited nor expected.

Christmas festivals, concerts, and other Sabbath school entertainments are in the charge of the Superintendent and teachers, but these were reminded, that any change should receive the approval of the Session before it is adopted. One of the Elders asked whether the custom of giving Christmas presents to the Sabbath school children ought to be approved. The Pastor saw no objection, provided the presents were inexpensive and given to all the regular scholars, including, of course, those who were sick. Prizes for good attendance and for committing scriptural passages, the Catechism, and selected hymns, might also be sanctioned, if open to all, and the same test was equally applied. To this the Session agreed.

XVI

PRIVATE MEETINGS OF SESSION

All the judicatories of the church hold open meetings, yet they "have the right to sit in private on business, which in their judgment ought not to be matter of public speculation." It is clearly understood by the Elders, that to be efficient in our oversight of the church, it is necessary that there should be perfect freedom and confidence in our consultations, that nothing said or done at our meetings is to be reported, except by order of Session. Often the characters of the communicants, the temptations of the young, the anxieties of the Pastor or the Elders, undeveloped plans, the unformed and perhaps changing opinions of the Elders, the first steps of discipline, and many other things must be considered privately. The votes of the several Elders, or the lack of unanimity in any decision, should likewise in no case be made known. In judicial cases all this is very important, and it is often necessary to sit with closed doors. The General Assembly has "recommended to its subordinate judicatories, that before entering upon judicial process, they carefully determine what degree of privacy or publicity in the proceedings would be most conducive to the ends of justice, the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

peace of the church, and the spiritual benefit of the person tried." The Book of Discipline says, "In all cases of judicial process, the judicatory may, at any stage of the case, determine, by a vote of two-thirds, to sit with closed doors."

We received notice from the Pastor that there would be a meeting of the Session at his house on Thursday evening. He reminded us of the privacy, which ought to be observed concerning matters discussed in Session. He did so, because some of us had not been as faithful in this respect as we should have been, and because to-night he wanted to bring before us a matter, which he would be very unwilling to have known beyond our number. We were his official advisers, although the decision must be made by himself.

After the service last Sabbath evening, two gentlemen and a lady called at his house, and introduced themselves as a committee from a Presbyterian church in a city in this State, which was without a Pastor. This was an entire surprise to him. They had heard of him from a former member of this church, and had been sent to hear him and see something of his work. They had been present at both services, at the Sabbath school, and at the Young People's Meeting. While they had been careful to keep the object of their visit secret, they had gained much of the information they desired, and after conference they felt that their church would be very willing to make out a call for him. They offered him a larger field, a united Session and church, but in which there was great need

PRIVATE MEETINGS OF SESSION

of organization, a fine body of young people who needed only a competent leader to become efficient members of the church, better advantages for the education of his own children, and a larger salary promptly paid. They had a long conversation with him concerning his work here, and their own congregation. They would not permit him to give an answer to their proposition, to nominate him to their full committee and their Session, until he had fairly considered the question, and made them a visit, either privately or as a supply to their pulpit for a Sabbath. We expressed our surprise and sorrow, and begged him not to leave us. He replied, that he had no desire to do so, but wanted us to tell him frankly, if we knew any reason why it might be better for our church, that he should listen to this call. One by one we assured him, that it would be a great injury to our congregation to part with him. He said that he wanted at the time to decline taking the matter into consideration. He had no desire to give up the work he had begun among a people he loved. At his request they had enlarged his Session, and had shown a disposition to co-operate in every plan for church work which he had proposed. Even were he inclined to go, it would be ungracious for him to leave at present. He felt too that he had begun a work which he ought not to abandon, until it was fairly established. He knew of course that he did not satisfy all in the congregation, that indeed was not to be expected. He had a loyal Session, and while that was the case, he had no fear of interference with his work. No

trouble could make much headway in a congregation unless one of the Elders gave it some encouragement. After the assurance he had just received, he would write at once requesting that his name be dropped from the list of candidates of that church.

One of the Elders suggested, that the Pastor's salary should be increased. He, however, requested that no move be made in that direction. The money question had not influenced his decision. The thing that had annoyed him was the irregularity of the payments, but that had been rectified since the conference of the Session with the Board of Trustees.

He was asked, if similar propositions had before been made to him. He reminded us that we had no right to ask such a question. Such matters were merely personal. Should they involve the interests of this church, he would feel it to be his duty, as in this case, to consult them. After some hesitation, however, he chose to admit, that he had been approached on two other occasions, but had not needed advice, as his duty was clear.

We have had several of these private meetings. Sometimes the Elders wanted to consult the Pastor, at others he desired our advice. He impressed upon us, while we were not to be tale bearers, or gossips, it was our duty to keep him informed of the state of the congregation, and of every thing in which his usefulness was involved. At such meetings much was said and conclusions reached, which were not intended for formal action or record. The facts were freely presented, and the point stated on which advice was desired, which was often gathered

PRIVATE MEETINGS OF SESSION

from the general conversation which followed, but sometimes each member of the Session was asked, in turn, his own opinion. Rising disaffections, against the Pastor or the Elders, could often be prevented or overcome, if thus made known in time; and serious difficulties removed, when taken in their early beginnings. He knew a case of an aggravated sin in an Elder, which was an open reproach against the church for months and the cause of serious division of feeling in the congregation, while the Pastor was kept in absolute ignorance. He knew that something was interfering with his work and with the increase of the church. He received much public blame, for all thought he must know the fact, yet no one spoke, and even the Elders were silent.

A meeting of the Elders without the Pastor is not only out of order, but is also discourteous to him, and a serious injury to the peace and unity of the church. As long as he is Pastor, he is an essential part of the Session and the head of it. He has a right to be present at every meeting held for consultation concerning the interests of the church. Such a meeting without him, is really, and usually intended to be, an act of rebellion against his authority, and the beginning of a conspiracy to remove him from his position. No honest Elder, regarding his ordination vows, can countenance such a meeting.

Not infrequently, however, meetings are held without the Pastor, but with his knowledge and approbation. They are private meetings, for special prayer and consultation concerning their per-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

sonal work as Elders. They are often of very great advantage to the Elders. No sessional acts are performed, nor decisions rendered. New plans may be suggested, but are not adopted nor put into operation until approved by the Pastor or passed in Session.

XVII

DISCIPLINE

Mr. Jones was still dissatisfied with the action of the Session in regard to the election of the Sabbath school officers. He talked continually of the tyranny and interference of the Pastor and Elders with the long recognized rights of the school to manage its own affairs. He found fault with the new activity of the Elders, and criticised very severely our action in regard to the lecture given some time ago in the church. He had heard of our conference with the Trustees and the result in a change in their management of the finances. He had influenced some of the teachers and older scholars. He was trying to create dissatisfaction in the congregation, and had even attempted to prejudice one of the Elders, and some members of the congregation, by insinuations against the Pastor and the Superintendent. All this was reported to the Session. The Pastor had not heard of it, although he was not surprised. Our senior Elder said that the conduct of Mr. Jones was well known, and as loyal to the church, and in duty bound to "study the peace, unity, and purity of the church" as well as to guard the honor and good name of the Pastor, he felt required to give this official notice and to ask the Session to take proper action.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

The Moderator said that he had performed his duty and in a proper spirit, but regretted much that action in this direction was necessary. He asked that before further consideration, we unite with him in earnest prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We did so feeling the solemnity of our responsibility.

Our Book says that "The ends of discipline are the maintenance of the truth, the vindication of the authority and honor of Christ, the removal of offences, the promotion of the purity and edification of the church, and the spiritual good of offenders." The object therefore is, not the punishment, but the reclaiming of the offender. After full consideration it was decided to appoint a committee of two Elders to call on Mr. Jones, and show him the unchristian spirit he is manifesting, and the injury he is doing to the Pastor and to the church.

The committee afterward reported, that they had several interviews with Mr. Jones, in which he maintained that he exercised his right as a member of the church to express his opinion of what he considered an outrage. When reminded, that the proper way to rectify wrongs was by giving notice of an appeal to Presbytery, and not by privately disturbing the harmony of the church, he replied that he preferred to choose his own means. The committee then thought best to intimate that he was committing an offence, which might lead to his being cited before the Session. He was not prepared for this, but presently denied our power to cite him, and defied us to do so. After these inter-

DISCIPLINE

views, he was for a time more cautious, and the Session waited patiently. But he was soon as active as ever in threatening the peace of the church and slandering the Pastor.

It was therefore decided to institute a judicial process. Two of the Elders were appointed a committee of prosecution "to conduct the prosecution in all its stages, in whatever judicatory, until the final issue be reached."

At the next meeting of the Session, this committee presented, in the name of THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, five charges, and under each of these six or seven specifications, with a long list of witnesses attached to each. It was all in order, but our Moderator suggested, that while in civil courts it might be well to have such a long indictment, in ecclesiastical judicatories it was much better to have few charges and specifications, and to cite under each only a few good witnesses. A single charge well sustained would be more effective than many of doubtful importance and with uncertain testimony. Brevity in the charges would promote brevity in the trial, and be less likely to disturb the congregation. The prosecuting committee retired, and soon returned with two charges. 1. Of slandering the Pastor, and 2. Of working against the peace and unity of the church. Under the first were two specifications, giving the time and place in which he had declared that the Pastor was untruthful, and had usurped authority. Three witnesses were named to substantiate each of these. Under the second

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

charge were also two specifications and three witnesses. This was accepted, and the Clerk was ordered to inform Mr. Jones that at 7 P.M. on Thursday of this week the Session should meet, and invited him to be present and show cause why these charges should not be tabled against him.

The Session met at the time and place appointed, but Mr. Jones did not appear. The Clerk reported that he had placed the notice in Mr. Jones' hands, who had glanced at it, and declared that he would not come. The Moderator informed us that the notice he had received was an invitation, not a citation. Had he appeared at this preliminary meeting, the charges would have been read, and he would have had the right to show why they should not be considered, or that they are defective in form. If he succeeded, the Session could dismiss them, or the prosecuting committee could obtain leave to modify them, and put them in proper legal form. As he did not appear, the Clerk was ordered to cite him to appear for trial in this place on the fourteenth day of November, being the tenth day after he should receive this citation, and that an authenticated copy of the charges and specifications, with the names of all the witnesses that shall be cited by the prosecution, be sent to him. He should be informed that the members of the judicatory may at any time be called on to testify without previous notice to the accused. His declaration that he will not appear does not relieve us from citing him.

When we met on the fourteenth, Mr. Jones failed to appear. After waiting a half hour, the Clerk was

DISCIPLINE

ordered to send him another citation, to meet the Session on next Monday evening, with a warning that if he does not appear in person or by counsel, he will be censured for contumacy, and, after appointing some one as his counsel, the Session will proceed with the trial and to judgment in his absence.

On Monday evening Mr. Jones appeared, but made no excuse for neglecting the first citation, although invited to do so. He brought lawyer Gibson, a member of our church, to act as his counsel. The Moderator informed him, that the Book of Discipline states "No professional counsel shall be permitted to appear and plead, in cases of process in any of our ecclesiastical judicatories. But if any accused person feel unable to represent and plead his own cause to advantage, he may request any Minister or Elder, belonging to the judicatory before which he appears, to prepare and exhibit his cause as he may judge proper," but such counsel cannot afterward sit in judgment in that case. He was very angry, and had to be warned for using disrespectful language in the presence of the judicatory. He finally requested, that Elder Smith be recognized as his counsel, and that the trial be postponed to allow him time to consult with him, and prepare his case. This was granted, and Thursday evening was appointed for the next meeting.

The Session met on Thursday evening, and after the usual opening prayer, the Moderator "solemnly announced from the chair, that the body is about to pass to the consideration of the business assigned

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

for trial, and enjoined on the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to act." The prosecuting committee then read the charges and specifications. Mr. Jones was asked if he desired to "file objections to the regularity of the organization, or to the jurisdiction of the judicatory, or to the sufficiency of the charges and specifications in form or legal effect, or any other substantial objection affecting the order or regularity of the proceedings." His counsel said they had none. The Moderator then asked if he pleaded "guilty" or "not guilty." He replied, "not guilty." The prosecuting committee then opened in a short speech. Their witnesses had received, more than ten days ago, citations, and were present, except two, one had asked to be excused this evening because of an important business engagement, and the other was detained by sickness. The committee said, they probably would not need testimony of the latter; if they did, they would either ask for the appointment of a commission to take it, or give due notice to the accused of the citation of another witness to take his place. To this Mr. Jones decidedly objected, denying the right of the committee to add to the list of witnesses, which had been furnished him. The committee contended that they had the right, giving due notice to the other side. They would not ask the Moderator to decide this point of order at this time, as in all probability the necessity would not arise.

The first charge and its first specification were

DISCIPLINE

then read, and the three witnesses were asked by the Moderator, "Do you solemnly promise in the presence of the omniscient and heart-searching God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge, in the matter in which you are called to testify, as you shall answer to the Great Judge of quick and dead?" They were examined by the prosecution, and cross-examined by the counsel for the accused. Their testimonies were carefully recorded, and afterward read by the Clerk and signed by the witnesses.

The second specification was, in like manner read, and the witnesses examined and cross-examined, etc. The second charge and its two specifications were managed in the same way. The prosecution here rested. Elder Smith said it was too late to make much progress in the defence, and he had no witness present; he therefore requested that the Session would adjourn for twelve days, that his witnesses might be cited and have the required ten days' notice. He was reminded that Mr. Jones had already ample notice to be ready to present his defence this evening, and should have had his citations delivered long ago, nevertheless the request was granted. He then handed to the Clerk, a list of persons whom he wished cited. On the list were the names of some, who were not members of our church. He was informed that these, not being under our jurisdiction, could not be cited. We would be very willing to receive their testimony, if he could induce them to be present. He asked

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

if he might bring a Roman Catholic; the Moderator said no objection would be raised. He claimed his right to produce witnesses, who were not on the list he had given to the Clerk. This was of course acknowledged. "All persons, whether parties or otherwise, are competent witnesses, except such as do not believe in the existence of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, or have not sufficient intelligence to understand the obligation of an oath. Any witness may be challenged for incompetency, and the judicatory shall decide the question." "The credibility of a witness, or the degree of credit due to his testimony, may be affected by relationship to any of the parties; by interest in the result of the trial; by want of proper age; by weakness of understanding; by infamy or malignity of character; by being under church censure; by general rashness or indiscretion; or by any other circumstances that appear to affect his veracity, knowledge, or interest in the case."

We met according to adjournment, and all parties were present. We were again warned by the Moderator, that we were to sit as a court of Jesus Christ. Elder Smith, as counsel of Mr. Jones, opened with a short speech, in which he took exception to the fact, that some of the witnesses of the prosecution were present, while another was testifying. The Moderator read from the Book of Discipline, "No witness afterwards to be examined, except a member of the judicatory, shall be present during the examination of another witness, if either party object." Had objection been made at the time, he

would have required the others to retire. Mr. Smith, at the request of Mr. Jones, asked that the objection be noted. It was so ordered, with the reply of the Moderator. He then called for his witnesses in turn, they were examined and cross-examined as before. Neither party objected to the presence of the witnesses while others were examined. He stated that Mr. Jones desired that his wife might testify in his favor, and, as she was confined to the house, he requested that a letter from her to the Session might be received as part of evidence. The Moderator decided that it was not in order to receive it, as it was not given under oath, and no opportunity was provided for cross-examination. Mr. Jones was indignant and appealed from his decision. The Pastor informed him, that the Session was not competent to entertain an appeal from the Moderator's decision on points of order. Against it, he could appeal to Presbytery, or enter his exception on the minutes. He determined to do the latter, still contending that he had a right to appeal to the Session. It was determined to appoint a Commission of the Session, consisting of the Pastor and two Elders, to go to Mr. Jones' house to-morrow to receive the testimony of Mrs. Jones. Notice was given to both parties that they may be present. "The testimony shall be taken in accordance with the rules governing the judicatory," and "the testimony, properly authenticated by the signatures of the commissioners, shall be transmitted in due time to the Clerk of the judicatory, before which the case is

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

pending." It shall be considered as if taken before the judicatory. Mr. Jones was then called to testify. He was often very disrespectful to the Pastor, and to some of the other members of Session. He was often reproved, and at last was warned that if he repeated the offence he would be at once censured for contumacy. Elder Smith stated that after the testimony of Mrs. Jones shall be taken by the Commission, he would rest the case. It was then agreed to receive the rebuttal on both sides, if there were any to be presented. The prosecution offered a letter written by Mr. Jones, which contradicted his testimony given before Session, and admitted all that the prosecution had attempted to prove. Mr. Jones, through his counsel, protested that the letter should not be read, as it was not mentioned in the list of evidence given to him at the beginning of the trial. He knew not how it had been obtained, and it was not sworn testimony. The Moderator decided it to be in order in rebuttal; it claimed to be signed by him, and he was at liberty to acknowledge or deny it, or to explain its meaning. This he refused to do. The letter was read as part of the evidence, and he entered his exception. The Session then adjourned to meet to-morrow, to hear the report of the Commission, and to listen to the closing arguments. The prosecution is to make the first plea, the defence will be presented by Elder Smith and Mr. Jones, as he made a special request that he be permitted to speak in his own behalf, and the closing speech will be by the prosecution. It was proposed to limit these pleas as to time, but it

DISCIPLINE

was deemed best to leave this to the good judgment of the parties.

When the Session met again the Moderator reminded us that we were sitting as a court of Jesus Christ, and we were about to enter upon the most solemn and responsible part of our duty. His prayer was earnest for our guidance, and that this trial might redound to the spiritual good of all concerned. The Commission presented an authenticated record of the testimony of Mrs. Jones, which was ordered to be received as part of the evidence in this case. The Committee of Prosecution made a short argument, summing up and commenting upon the evidence presented. Elder Smith and Mr. Jones replied, and a member of the Committee of Prosecution made the closing argument. The parties having now been fully heard, the judicatory went into private session, "the parties, their counsel and all other persons not members of the body being excluded." Elder Smith, although a member of Session, having acted as counsel, had to retire. I had given testimony, but "a member of the judicatory may be called upon to testify in a case that comes before it . . . and after having given his testimony, may immediately resume his seat as a member of the judicatory." Elder Frost was absent from one of the meetings, but he had carefully read all the evidence and heard both parties plead; he could not "be allowed to vote on any question arising therein, except by unanimous consent of the judicatory and of the parties." Mr. Jones objected, and he therefore had also to retire.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

When the Session was alone, our Pastor again led us in prayer, and reminded us, that we were about to express the judgment of a court of Christ, and in His name. Our authority was not inherent in us as christians or as officers. It was not derived from the people, we were not to act in this as their representatives. Christ has given authority to the Elders for the edification of the church, and for the maintenance of truth and His honor. This authority, we were to exercise, was "ministerial or declarative," that is, as servants (Ministers) we were to declare, in Christ's name, what we believe to be His judgment in the case before us.

After careful deliberation the Session proceeded to vote on each specification, and on each charge separately. One specification was not considered proven; the others were sustained. The judgment of the Session was, that Mr. Jones was guilty of the other specifications, and therefore of the charges, and that he be and hereby is suspended from the communion of the church, until he shows evidence of repentance. This was ordered to be entered upon the minutes, and that an authenticated copy be sent to Mr. Jones. It was decided that in this case, it is not necessary to give formal public notice of this judgment. Our Book of Discipline says, "The sentence shall be published, if at all, only in the church or churches which have been offended."

The Pastor informed us, that if Mr. Jones had pleaded "guilty," the Session could at once have proceeded to judgment. If he had refused to plead, the plea of "not guilty" should have been entered,

DISCIPLINE

and the trial would have been carried on as it had been. Had he been an Elder, and been found "guilty," the Session would have had to consider whether his offence had been merely official, not involving his christian character; if so, he would have been suspended from the exercise of the Eldership and not from the communion. If it did involve his christian character, and the Session suspended him from the communion, he would also be suspended from the exercise of his office. Restoration on repentance to the privileges of the church would not restore him to office. "He cannot be restored to the function of his office, without a special and express act of the Session for that purpose, with the acquiescence of the church." His reelection by the communicants would seem necessary.

Our responsibility concerning Mr. Jones does not end with his suspension. He is a member of the church under discipline. "After a person is thus suspended, the Minister and Elders should frequently converse with him, as well as pray for him in private, that it would please God to give him repentance." He should at the proper time be informed that "when a suspended person has failed to manifest repentance for his offence, and has continued in obstinate impenitence not less than a year, it may become the duty of the judicatory to excommunicate him without further trial." "When a judgment of excommunication is to be executed, with or without previous suspension, it is proper that the sentence be publicly pronounced against

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

the offender " according to the form given in the Directory for Worship, chapter xi., section 6.

Mr. Jones, having been sent for to hear the sentence of the Session, now appeared with his counsel. The Session rose and he was requested to stand. The Moderator then said, " Whereas you have been found guilty, by sufficient proof, of the sins of slandering the Pastor and of working against the peace and unity of the church, we declare you suspended from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, till you give satisfactory evidence of repentance." A few words of admonition were added, and the whole " concluded with prayer to Almighty God, that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing."

Through his counsel Mr. Jones said that he would, within the required time, give notice of an appeal to Presbytery from this sentence, and asked for an authenticated copy of the whole proceedings. The Moderator replied that he could have copies at his own expense. A copy of the sentence, signed by the Moderator and Clerk, was at once placed in his hands.

XVIII

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

A few days later, the Moderator called a meeting of the Session, as the Clerk had received a notice of appeal from Mr. Jones. It was read, and found to be simply a declaration, that he intended to appeal from the judgment of the Session to the Presbytery at its next meeting. It was presented within the ten days required, and we were not required to object to it. But at the suggestion of the Moderator it was returned to him, that he might, if he pleased, put it in such a form that the Presbytery could entertain it. To be in order, it should state the grounds of appeal (as described in section 95 of the Book of Discipline), "with specifications of the errors alleged." I asked what was the effect of the notice of appeal. The Pastor read from the Book, "When the judgment directs admonition or rebuke, notice of appeal shall suspend all further proceedings, but in other cases the judgments shall be in force, until the appeal shall be decided." The General Assembly said in 1881, "A complaint alone does not suspend or arrest the action complained of."

On being asked, "What is the difference between an appeal and a complaint?" the Pastor answered,

"Before 1821 no distinction was made between them, the usual expression was, 'We complain and appeal.'" But now a distinction is made. "A complaint is a written representation made to the next superior judicatory, by one or more persons subject and submitting to the jurisdiction of the judicatory complained of, respecting any delinquency, or any decision, by the inferior judicatory." But "an appeal is the removal of a judicial case, by a written representation, from an inferior to a superior judicatory; and may be taken by either of the original parties, from the final judgment of the lower judicatory. The original parties are the accused, and the one who brought the charge against him—the individual prosecutor, or (when the prosecution is initiated by a judicatory) THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, represented by the prosecuting committee. *Both of these parties, and no other, have a right to appeal, whatever the decision may be. Others have the right of complaint."

The members of the minority of a judicatory may receive permission to record their "dissent" expressing disagreement with a decision of the majority in a particular case, or they may record their "protest," which is "a more formal declaration, made by one or more members of a minority, bearing testimony against what is deemed a mischievous or erroneous proceeding, decision, or judgment, and including a statement of the reasons therefor."

"A reference is a representation in writing, made by an inferior to a superior judicatory, of a judicial

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

case not yet decided.” “References are, either for mere advice, preparatory to a decision by the inferior judicatory, or for ultimate trial and decision by the superior; and are to be carried to the next higher judicatory. If for advice the reference only suspends the decision of the inferior judicatory; if for trial, it submits the whole case to the final judgment of the superior,” which however “is not necessarily bound to give a final judgment . . . but may remit the whole case, either with or without advice, to the inferior judicatory.”

Another way by which a case could be brought before the higher judicatory, is by “general review and control.” All the proceedings of the Session must be carefully recorded. This is especially required in judicial cases. The records must be presented once a year to Presbytery for examination and approval. “In such review, the judicatory shall examine, *first*, whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded; *second*, whether they have been constitutional and regular; and, *third*, whether they have been wise, equitable, and for the edification of the church.” If anything unwise, unjust, or out of order has been done, it would come before Presbytery for correction, even if no appeal or complaint were made.

At our next meeting, Elder Smith in behalf of Mr. Jones presented a corrected notice of his appeal. It is now in order, and specifies as his grounds of appeal, that he was not permitted reasonable indulgence in the choice of a counsel; that a letter was received as evidence which was not mentioned to

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

him at the beginning of the trial; that the members of the Session were prejudiced before the trial began; and the sentence was disproportioned to the offence. The prosecuting committee was notified to be ready to defend the sentence of Session before the Presbytery at its next meeting, they were authorized to secure counsel to assist them, if they deemed it to be wise. The Clerk was required to send by the delegate the full records of the case (or an authenticated copy of the same), all papers pertaining to it, together with the notice of the appeal, and a statement as to the date of its presentation to Session. All these must be placed in the hands of the stated Clerk of Presbytery, as soon as it is announced that the appellant has lodged his appeal with that Clerk.

In the case of a complaint, the Session should appoint a committee to appear before Presbytery, and defend its action against the complainant. In a reference no committee is needed; if advice is asked, the reference contains the request; and if final adjudication is desired, the whole case is remitted to the Presbytery, and the Pastor and Elders of the church, as members, "sit, deliberate, and vote." Nor is a committee needed when one records a Dissent. But one is often appointed to prepare and answer a Protest, which should be recorded with it on the minutes. This should always be done when the principles or reasons of the action seem to be misrepresented by the Protest. "If a Dissent or Protest be couched in decorous and respectful language, and be without offensive

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

reflections or insinuations against the majority, it shall be entered on the records.”

After the trial has been initiated the prosecuting committee cannot be deprived of its right to appeal by the judicatory ordering the discharge of the committee.

XIX

PASTOR'S VACATION

According to our Pastor's call, he is to have a vacation of four weeks each year. He informed the Session he would not take one this year, because he desired to attend "The Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian system," which is to meet next summer at Glasgow, Scotland, and to be absent then eight weeks. The Session was eager that he should attend the Alliance, but did not approve of his taking no rest this summer. They insisted upon his annual vacation, as necessary for his health and continued efficiency, which it was their duty to see provided for. They knew that the Trustees would agree with them, and they would concert with them to prolong his vacation next year. He thanked them, saying if that was the wish of the church, he would be ready to see that his pulpit was well supplied for the four extra weeks. The Elders replied that they and the Trustees would arrange to meet all the expenses. When the time came he received also a purse that he might take with him his wife, who was much beloved and very efficient in the church.

Arrangements were then made for his vacation

PASTOR'S VACATION

this year. The Elders agreed to take charge, in turn, of the Wednesday evening prayer meetings. The Pastor suggested that he, "with the concurrence of the Session," invite Rev. Mr. Alexander, a retired Minister, belonging to our Presbytery, to be Moderator of Session during his absence. It was so agreed. A committee of three was appointed to secure supplies for the pulpit, arrange for their entertainment, and to see that they received promptly checks from the Treasurer. The Pastor was requested to furnish this committee with a list of the names of Ministers whom he would be willing to have preach in his pulpit during his absence; for as Pastor, he is responsible for whatever is taught even in his vacation. He was asked, if the son of Elder Smith, a candidate for the ministry, might be invited to preach one Sabbath. He replied, "Certainly, since he is a licentiate, and his examination before Presbytery has been very satisfactory. If he had not been licensed, I would have been glad to invite him to preach, when I was myself in the pulpit."

We Elders were reminded that during the vacation, the pastoral visitation and oversight will devolve solely upon us. In any perplexity we may turn to Rev. Mr. Alexander for advice, but the responsibility will be ours. He will call meetings of Session when desired, and will preside. The sick and the afflicted will be our special charge. If any one should be dangerously ill, we should ask Mr. Alexander to minister to him, and in case of death to attend the funeral, unless the family have a preference for some other Minister. We, in the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Pastor's absence, should be the more careful to be present at such funerals, representing the church.

One of the Elders suggested, that during the Pastor's absence it might be well to have but one service on the Sabbath, but he and most of the Elders decidedly objected to the change. The means of grace were as much needed in the summer, as at other times. Irregularity in the services produces a decrease in the attendance, and in the spiritual life of the congregation. The Pastor felt this so much that he would have preferred to remain at home all summer, rather than have the evening service omitted.

Some of the Sabbath school teachers sent in a request that there might be a vacation for the school during the hot season, chiefly for the relief of the teachers, who felt the need of some lessening of their Sabbath duties. This seemed reasonable and received careful consideration. It was noticed that the Superintendent and several of the most experienced teachers had not joined in this request. The Pastor said he knew their judgment in the matter, and it agreed with his own. A vacation always demoralizes a Sabbath school, and causes the loss of both teachers and scholars. This is true. A measure, even in the day school, where vacations are necessary, because, among other reasons of the character of the instruction, and the great strain upon the mental powers. But the means of grace are always needed in forming habits and in maintaining and developing spiritual life. It was therefore decided, that the school should be continued

PASTOR'S VACATION

throughout the year, but the Superintendent was advised to make suitable arrangements, that the teachers, who desired rest, should in turn have substitutes appointed for their classes. These substitutes might be those not now in connection with the school, but who by this temporary service might be secured as permanent teachers.

During the Pastor's vacation I had an experience, which at the time was very trying. One of the young men of my district was seriously injured on the railroad and was reported as dying. I went at once for Rev. Mr. Alexander, but he was out of town. It was clearly my duty to go myself, and I went in great perplexity. All was excitement in the house, and a number of persons were in the room, who made place for me. For my own and the patient's good, I suggested that all should retire except those really needed. The man was suffering greatly, but was not in immediate danger of death. He was not a christian, nor was he in the habit of attending church. I asked him some questions, which he did not answer. He seemed scarcely to heed what I was saying. I began, therefore, to exhort him to consider the condition of his soul. The doctor kindly told me, that he was in too much pain for protracted thought. A few words of sympathy and of prayer were all that he could then bear, and he must be kept as quiet as possible. I repeated a verse about the love of Christ and offered a short prayer. He said nothing. I came away thinking I had done no good, nor improved perhaps the only opportunity of seeking his salvation. How

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

I did long for the Pastor! When I called the next day, I found that he was much more free from pain. He had been informed that he could not live. He welcomed me gratefully, and said the text I gave him yesterday, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," had been in his mind ever since. He was eager to hear of Christ. I said a few words only, as he was very weak, and again prayed with him. He lingered about a week, and I had many short talks about his past life, and the salvation purchased and freely offered by Christ. He seemed at last to manifest true penitence and faith, and expressed his willingness to die. The family were satisfied that he became a christian. This was a great comfort, and the experience taught me how to perform better this part of my duty, and what a peculiar pleasure there was in it. Rev. Mr. Alexander also often called, and was hopeful concerning him, and at his request baptized him. But he disappointed me in not expressing the same confidence that I felt. At the funeral, he was evidently cautious in what he said or implied.

On the return of the Pastor I told him the whole matter, and my dissatisfaction with the uncertainty which Mr. Alexander evidently felt. He replied, that in our visitations it was very important to consider carefully the condition and circumstances of those on whom we call. Often much harm is done by inopportune talking and long prayers. One important thought clearly expressed to the

PASTOR'S VACATION

sick or afflicted is usually all they can receive at the time, and is worth far more than a long conversation, which only provokes weariness and forgetfulness. Absolute silence, with an exhibition of sympathy, often brings more comfort to those in great pain or sorrow than any words that can be uttered. Frequent short visits are more effective than long ones. And a truth, in the very words of the Scriptures, will make a deeper impression than the same truth in our own language, because it comes with the authority and power of God.

As to the baptism of the young man, he held, in accordance with our Book, that, where there was no church organization, and in special emergencies, the Minister, in virtue of his office, had the right to administer Baptism according to his own judgment. But in the bounds of a church, it is the prerogative of the Session to admit persons to the sealing ordinances. When this young man desired to be baptized, it was competent and orderly for Mr. Alexander to call, at least some of the Elders to meet at the house and hear his confession of faith, and be present at the Baptism. Man cannot read the heart, and we are not called upon to decide whether one is indeed a christian. If he gives evidence of sincerity, and his profession of faith be credible, we should receive him, even if in our minds there may be some doubt. We should instruct and warn him against self-deception, and urge him to depend alone upon Christ.

Deathbed repentance should be regarded as possible. In Scripture we have one (perhaps only

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

one) case of salvation at the last hour, the penitent thief, that none may despair. Yet there is no encouragement to delay or presumption. Pastors learn to be very cautious in accepting such repentance. He told me that in his ministry, he had met with several cases like the following: A gay young woman sent for him when the doctors told her that she could not live. She spoke freely of her past careless and worldly life, expressing great sorrow for sin, professing faith in Christ, and she desired him to pray that she might for a time recover in order that she might prove the reality of her repentance. Her friends were all pleased. The only thing that made the Pastor suspicious, was that she was more ready to talk of her experiences of sorrow for sin and present peace, than of the person and grace of Christ. She did recover from that attack, and went back to her former life. She could not be persuaded to attend any religious service. A few years later she was again very ill, and after a similar experience, died expressing hope of eternal life. Often these experiences are caused by physical changes. Bodily weakness brings a lassitude which is mistaken for spiritual peace with God. And as this has been preceded by an apprehension of wrath due to sin, it is regarded as sure evidence of conversion. I received many other hints and directions from my Pastor in such conversations, which were very useful in my visitations. He was always ready thus to help me.

During the Pastor's vacation, a meeting of the Session was called by Rev. Mr. Alexander, to at-

PASTOR'S VACATION

tend to some necessary matters. A communicant, who had been absent from the place for several years, had written for her certificate to unite with the church she had been attending. Her name had long ago been placed on the reserved list, as we had known nothing of her address or conduct. It was proposed to give her a qualified letter. This the Moderator said would be in order. One of the Elders asked permission to read her letter making application for her certificate. In it she freely gives an account of her life since leaving our supervision, and a satisfactory reason for remaining so long without uniting with another church, while confessing the unintentional omission of communicating with us. She enclosed also a letter from the Pastor of the church with which she desires to unite, in which he says that Mrs. Harris has been under his supervision ever since she left our church, and speaks very highly of her christian life and influence. We regarded this as satisfactory, and voted that a certificate of good standing be given to her.

One of the Elders reported, that a member in his district had been found intoxicated, under aggravated circumstances. He had been warned, that if he fell into this sin again, he would be reported to the Session for discipline. The Elder desired that steps should be immediately taken. The Moderator said, that he thought it ill advised to initiate proceedings in the absence of the Pastor. In presiding temporarily over the Session, custom and courtesy demanded that he should allow only routine business to be transacted, except in cases of

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

real necessity. The Elder thought that the present was such a case. The man had received warning and expected a citation, his own official veracity was at stake, and he was sure that the Pastor would approve of immediate action. He was answered, that he had fulfilled his word, he had reported the offence. He had not been authorized to pledge what action the Session would take on his report. He could inform the man that he had reported him, and that action was necessarily deferred until the Pastor's return. This time of suspense and reflection might prove of benefit to him. It was so ordered. The Moderator stated that he had often seen the injurious effects of initiating a process of discipline in the absence of the Pastor. In this case, he would advise the Elder in charge, to visit frequently the offender, and deal very faithfully with him, yet with great patience and gentleness. He should remember that drunkenness is a disease as well as a sin, and in the paroxysms of the disease a man often "would do good, but the evil is present with him and how to perform that which is good he finds not." This evil in the body, as well as the sin which easily besets the soul, should increase our sympathy and helpfulness for all those who are struggling to reform. Frequent lapses, while inexcusable in them, ought not to discourage us who are conscious of being often in like manner overcome by our own besetments, which in God's sight may be as heinous. It may be, that the Elder's influence and instruction may render further action of the Session unnecessary. The Elder thanked

PASTOR'S VACATION

him for the advice, and promised to do what he could. He acknowledged that other action at this time would be improper. The Pastor ought in person to direct the first and all the steps of discipline.

XX

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

Soon after our Pastor's return from his vacation, the Session met, and the records of the two meetings held in his absence were read. They contained only routine business which could not well be delayed until his return. They met with his full approval. He asked many questions about the Sabbath school and the different members of the church, especially of the sick and the afflicted. He informed himself of the condition of the people, and inquired on whom we thought he should at once call. He had already visited the family of the man who, during his absence, had been injured on the railroad and had died. We had at the time notified him of the fact, and that Rev. Mr. Alexander would attend the funeral. He at once wrote to the family, and called on his return.

At this meeting two young men presented themselves, asking to be recommended to Presbytery as candidates for the ministry. They were communicants of our church, and held in high esteem by our Session and people. One of them had lately graduated with high honors from college. The Session had a full conversation with him in regard to his personal religion and his motives for desiring

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

to enter the ministry. We were well satisfied and agreed to recommend him. He also desired us to approve his application to the Board of Education for aid during his Seminary course. He stated his pecuniary means, and we inquired the lowest amount really needed to enable him to go through the yearly sessions without interference with his study and his health. He replied that he would require the full amount of the usual appropriation granted by the Board. If at any time he found he could get on with less, he would give us notice. He was informed that the recommendations of the Session and of the Presbytery were only for one year, and may be renewed annually if needed. The Clerk was requested to report our action to the Presbytery's Committee on Education, and the young man was notified to be present at the next meeting of Presbytery, and there to appear before the said committee, and on its approval to be received under care of Presbytery, as a candidate, after an examination on personal religion and his motives for desiring to enter the gospel ministry.

The other young man had not been at college, nor was he at present prepared to enter. So far his widowed mother had supported him, but his expenses increased as he advanced, and his sisters needed all that could be spared for their support and education. He was therefore anxious to receive an appropriation from the Board. He was the more carefully examined because he was at an early stage in his preparation, and he was informed that should he receive this aid, and afterward be turned

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

aside from the ministry, he would be expected to refund the money, as it had been contributed for a certain purpose, assisting men into the ministry, and could be appropriated to no other. He promised to do so. "The appropriations of the Board are not to be regarded as loans to be refunded by those who comply with the rules and regularly enter the ministry, but as cheerful contributions to facilitate and expedite their preparation for it." "The sums of money appropriated by the Board shall be refunded to it with interest, in case a student fail to enter on, or continue in the work of, the ministry, unless he can make it appear that he is providentially prevented; if he cease to adhere to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church; if he change his place of study contrary to the directions of his Presbytery; or continue to prosecute his studies at an institution not approved by it or the Board; or withdraw his connection from the church, of which this Board is the organ, without furnishing a satisfactory reason." We approved of the school he was attending, and told him also to appear before the Presbytery's Committee on Education. Our recommendation of him will be sent by the Clerk, with a statement of the circumstances of the case. The Pastor informed him and the Session that the Board of Education did not ordinarily grant such applications. Indeed, they seldom departed from their rule, not to assist students until they were prepared to enter college, except the sons of Ministers and those for whom special contributions are sent to the Board. This young man was the son of a Mission-

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

ary, who had died a few years ago in Siam, and therefore probably would be accepted.

These two candidates were reminded, that they will continue under the care and jurisdiction of the Session until they are ordained as Ministers. They will be subject to the Presbytery as to their studies and their trials for licensure and ordination. Their appropriations from the Board will depend upon their behavior and success in study, as reported by their professors and the Session; and no payment will be made, until they are certified to be actually present at the place of study. They should report to the Session and to the Presbytery at least once a year. The Pastor also recommended them, when at home, to attend, as often as possible, the meetings of Session, and during their Seminary course to be present at the meetings of Presbytery and the higher judicatories whenever they can have the opportunity of doing so. It is very important that they should accompany their Elders when convenient in their visitations, and under their supervision be introduced to the various departments of official work. This practical familiarity with the business and methods of church courts, and with the oversight of individuals and the congregation, will prove a very important part of their preparation for the ministry. The Elders, in whose district candidates belonged, were requested to maintain a constant correspondence with them, especially as to their christian character and the development of the graces which are necessary to their efficiency in the ministry, and to encourage them in church and

Sabbath school work without interfering with their studies.

An Elder reported that one of the communicants was about to enter the second, or middle, year of his Seminary course, and had not placed himself under the care of the Presbytery as a candidate. He had said, that it was not necessary, as he did not need assistance from the Board. He was thinking of taking this middle year in the Congregational Seminary at New Haven, and it might be more convenient to be taken under the care of a Presbytery, which may be nearer the Seminary in which he may spend his senior year. The Elder was requested to inform him, that all this was out of order. The Presbytery should have the oversight of the studies of its candidates. The General Assembly has several times directed that candidates, whether receiving aid or not from the Board of Education, should be required to put themselves under care of Presbytery as soon as possible, that they may receive proper supervision during their entire course. They should consult their Presbyteries before changing their church or school relations. "Every candidate for licensure shall be taken on trial by that Presbytery to which he most naturally belongs, and he shall be considered as most naturally belonging to that Presbytery within the bounds of which he has ordinarily resided." If at any time it be found desirable to be transferred to another Presbytery, this can be done by applying for such transfer, and the certificate will state what parts of trial have been assigned, and what he has passed with approval. The Assem-

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

bly has frequently "enjoined upon the Presbyteries to see that their candidates for the ministry prosecute their studies only at such Theological Seminaries . . . as are thus approved and recognized by the Presbyterian Church as sound in faith and attached to our ecclesiastical order and forms of worship as laid down in the accredited Standards of our church." This was reiterated in 1895. The candidate was therefore directed to give up the idea of going to New Haven, and that he should present himself to the Presbytery at the next meeting. The Elder was also requested to notify him, that the Session had been credibly informed that he had on several occasions preached in pulpits and pronounced the benediction, he not being licensed nor even recognized as a candidate by the church; that this is disorderly and should not be repeated. Were he under the care of the Presbytery, that judicatory would have called him to account for such an offence.

There were two others who wished to be received as candidates. One was about thirty-five years old. He had received a pretty good English education and had read several theological works of our best divines. For some time he has had an increasing desire to preach the gospel. He was nearly prepared to enter college, except in the languages, but felt that he was too old to spend seven more years in preparation. We agreed with him, and were convinced that he could be very useful in the ministry. The Session therefore recommended him to appear before the Presbytery's Committee on

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Education, with our endorsement, and apply to be received as a candidate and be permitted to take the English course in the Seminary.

The other was about the same age, and had a wife and two children. He also felt an earnest desire to preach. Under the direction of the Session he had been very useful in establishing Sabbath schools and holding prayer meetings in destitute places. After a long conversation he was advised to be licensed as a Local Evangelist, and the Session resolved to request the Presbytery to appoint him to labor in and near the bounds of our congregation, as we have need of such a laborer and he will thus be near his family. He inquired, "What is a Local Evangelist?" The Pastor replied, that in 1893, this Constitutional Rule was adopted: "It shall be lawful for Presbytery, after proper examination as to his piety, knowledge of Scripture, and ability to teach, to license, as a Local Evangelist, any male member of the church, who, in the judgment of the Presbytery, is qualified to preach the gospel publicly, and who is willing to engage in such service under the direction of Presbytery. Such license shall be valid for one year, unless renewed; and such licensed Evangelist shall report to the Presbytery at least once a year, and his license may be withdrawn at any time at the pleasure of Presbytery." The Local Evangelist is not a Minister, with power to administer the Sacraments, etc. The rule, however, provides how he may, after a term of service and due examinations, be ordained to the ministry. He was invited to call at the manse, and have a full

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

conversation with the Pastor in regard to this work, and his preparation for it.

The Pastor informed us, that he had received a letter from a member of our church, stating he was in the Theological Seminary, and would apply to be taken under the care of Presbytery at the next meeting. He wishes the Session to recommend him for aid from the Board of Education, as he is in great need of assistance. Our Pastor had replied that he would lay his letter before us, but it was very doubtful whether the appropriation could be granted, as he had not been a member a full year of the Presbyterian Church. The Assembly has directed that "no candidate shall be received by the Board, who has not been a member of the Presbyterian Church, or of some closely related body, for at least one year." The Board is bound to carry out these directions of the Assembly. The Session decided to send a recommendation of him to the Presbytery, and to urge that during the eight months since he left the Episcopal Church, and had been a member of ours, we had watched his christian life with much satisfaction. He has been very diligent in the Sabbath school and other church work, and has given good evidence of future usefulness in the ministry.

One of the Elders said that he had been credibly informed, that one of our candidates, who had just entered the freshman class at college, was making close friendships with irreligious and wild students. He, realizing his danger, thought it to be his duty to make further inquiries, and the result in-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

creased his anxiety. The report from the professors was very unfavorable. The Pastor asked if the candidate was under the care of the Board, for if he were we could not renew his recommendation until we had further ascertained the truth of these reports. The Elder replied that he was not, and part of his temptation lay in the fact that his mother gave him too large an allowance. He was requested to seek more definite information by correspondence, and if necessary by a visit to the college, and by personal interviews with him, the professors, some of his christian classmates, and with his mother, and to do what may seem wise to reclaim him from his present temptations. If need be, he should be warned, that if he continues this intimacy, his reputation and character will be seriously affected, and the Session will have to take further action.

The roll of our candidates and licentiates was then called, and the several Elders to whose districts these belonged, reported concerning the christian character of each, and his progress in preparation and prospect of usefulness. Those under the care of the Board of Education, were re-recommended, if their reports from their professors were favorable. Others were to be informed by the Clerk why we were unable to renew their applications.

The Pastor said that he had heard a report, that in one of our Theological Seminaries, the students were known at times to attend the theatre, on the plea that they desired to hear noted actors, and thus improve their own oratory. This had scandalized many who were large contributors to the Seminary

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

and to the Board. This caused us much surprise and sorrow. It was resolved, that the several Elders, having candidates under their special care, be requested to make strict inquiries, whether any of them have been guilty of this offence, and that all our candidates be informed that the theatre is not the proper school for theological students. The style and manner of actors are not fit models for pulpit eloquence, and the associations and companionships connected with the theatre are injurious to christian character.

They were requested to inquire also if any of our candidates are in the habit of using tobacco. We do not condemn its use as a sin. The over-indulgence in any thing, however good, is sinful. The participation of that which may in itself be right and profitable, becomes unlawful when it proves a temptation or an offence to others, or interferes with christian influence. Church officers are to be examples to the flock in self-denial, as well as in other graces, and they should see that "their ministry is not blamed." None can be too careful of his reputation and conduct. The Pastor said, that he knew of several Ministers and Elders, who were beloved by those under their care, but whose presence was unwelcome and even injurious to the sick and the afflicted. He was himself convinced that the use of tobacco in any form was hurtful to the human system. He often heard physicians say of their patients who were very ill, that they would in all probability recover, had they not been in the habit of using tobacco or cigarettes. It is, however, very

certain that the supporters of the Board of Education did not contribute their money to enable candidates to indulge in this, not clean nor useful, habit. Church funds ought never to be used for self-gratification. The Board of Education asks concerning each candidate, before granting an appropriation, "Is he free from expensive and injurious habits?"

Our senior Elder said, that every time he had been at Presbytery he had been struck with the fact, that the younger and some of our older Ministers, were strangely deficient in practical knowledge of Presbyterian polity, and in the methods of church work. He asked whether it were not possible, in our Theological Seminaries, that instruction might not be made more practical. As a business man, he had been surprised that so much valuable time of the Presbytery was taken up in correcting mistakes and in instructing Ministers. The Pastor replied that this was very important, and had often caused him much concern. He himself had felt the need when placed over his first charge. He had been well instructed in the theory of church government in the Seminary, and had passed an excellent examination for graduation and before Presbytery, but he had never been present at a meeting of Session, since he was received in childhood on profession of faith, and was absolutely ignorant of the practical working of our system. He was much embarrassed when he found himself, for the first time, presiding over the Session, and experienced Elders were looking to him for direction. A case of discipline was at that meeting presented, which

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

had perplexed the Elders and had been twice postponed that their new Minister might guide them to the proper solution. After considerable discussion it was unanimously resolved, to ask the Presbytery to send an overture to the General Assembly, proposing, that the students of our Theological Seminaries be, by the Presbyteries, placed under the care of experienced Pastors during their summer vacations, to act as their assistants, to attend meetings of Session, to engage in pastoral visitations with them and the Elders, to labor in Sabbath school, in church and evangelistic work, and prepare addresses, lectures, and sermons, and to deliver them in their presence before different audiences. The practical experience thus obtained would prove of great value in their after ministries, and be ample compensation for the time and labor bestowed. It is true, that they now depend upon these summer vacations to earn money, by which they are to be in a measure supported during the following term. But no congregation ought to be willing to receive the benefit of this additional pastoral service, without giving the student a suitable remuneration. Such arrangements should be made. Our Pastor and delegate were requested to urge the Presbytery at the next meeting to endorse and forward this overture to the General Assembly.

Our Pastor said he had just received a letter from the Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Education, calling attention to the fact, that the General Assembly of 1895 had directed the Board to draw up a plan by which, as nearly as possible, all grad-

uates of our Theological Seminaries shall be sent to serve at least one year under the supervision of their Presbyteries in some mission field. To secure the successful inauguration of such a plan, the hearty coöperation of the Presbyteries and Seminaries will be essential; and the Board has been directed to correspond with these bodies for this purpose. It is felt that when the student has had the privileges of our excellent institutions, endowed at the expense of hundreds of thousands of dollars, at his disposal, and if he needs pecuniary assistance, the aid of scholarships, and appropriations from the Board, he ought to look upon it as a duty and a privilege to put himself under the direct orders of the church which educated him, for a period of at least one year, for service in fields to which older men cannot so readily be sent. The advantages would be great to the student himself, and to the Presbyteries in their oversight of the churches and of mission fields.

This letter was recognized to be of real importance, and greatly interested us. We shall eagerly look for the plan and for its reception by the General Assembly and the Presbyteries.

XXI

DELEGATES TO PRESBYTERY

The regular Fall meeting of the Presbytery was soon to be held, and the Session met to prepare for it. The Pastor, by virtue of his office as Minister, is a member, but each church must send a Ruling Elder as delegate. The Moderator informed us, that if our church had more than one Pastor, the Session could send Elders equal in number to the Pastors. But if two or more churches were under one Pastor, they could send only one Elder, who should be chosen by the several churches in turn. A vacant church, that is, one which is without a Pastor, is nevertheless entitled to be represented by an Elder. These delegates should be appointed to attend each and every meeting of Presbytery, the regular, adjourned, and "pro re nata" meetings. The extra meetings are often very important, and the people have a right to a voice in every act. Up to this time, our church has not been regularly represented. An Elder had been appointed whenever one felt inclined to go, or something of special interest was to be considered. Our Pastor impressed upon us the duty of the Elders in turn attending the meetings of Presbytery, and of the Session in requiring of them reports concerning

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

their attendance and diligence. It was resolved, that hereafter delegates be regularly appointed. There are several methods by which this may be done. In many Sessions any Elder willing to go, is appointed. In this way, while the Session is represented, only one or two of the Elders have all the advantages, for the rest seldom, if ever, are appointed. This is a great evil. Another plan is to appoint the Elder who is best qualified to attend to the business which is expected to come before that special meeting. As this secures the best representation of Session in emergencies, it is well at such times to adopt it, but not as a general rule. For all the Elders should be developed by the exercise of their powers in all church business. In ordinary circumstances, the Elders in regular succession should be appointed, and none should be excused, except for serious reasons. It is sometimes found desirable to appoint a delegate to attend all meetings of Presbytery which may be held during the next six months. In large Sessions a different delegate should be chosen for each meeting, that the turns of each may come more frequently. We determined to adopt this last method, and that the order should be determined by the date of ordination. In every case alternates are to be appointed to go in the place of the delegate, in case he is providentially detained, and that these be chosen in order from the bottom of the roll. Our senior Elder, Dr. Perkins, was appointed to attend the next meeting of Presbytery, and I as his alternate, for my name was the last on the list.

DELEGATES TO PRESBYTERY

We were reminded that the delegate should be present at the opening of the meeting of Presbytery, and attend all its sessions until the close. He must be prepared to report his diligence to the Session on his return. The Pastor suggested that it would be profitable to ask the delegate, soon after the meeting, to make an address to the congregation, giving an account of the business transacted, and especially the information contained in the reports of the committees on the several Boards. He adopted this plan in his former charge, to the increasing interest and edification of the people and the increase of the collections.

The prosecuting committee was notified to appear at Presbytery on the second day, to defend the action of the Session against the appeal of Mr. Jones. All the papers connected with the case were to be placed in the care of the delegate, who must see that they are safely returned to the Clerk.

The delegate must watch after the comfort and interests of our candidates, and pay special attention to whatever may concern our own congregation.

One of the Elders had been previously appointed to prepare a report on the state of religion in our congregation. He had used the blanks prepared under the direction of the General Assembly for the narratives of the state of religion. This he now read, and after a few changes, it was adopted, and ordered to be sent to the Chairman of the Presbytery's Committee on the Narrative, a week before the Presbytery meets. The object of this is to en-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

able that Committee to prepare its Narrative to be sent to Synod, after it has been adopted by the Presbytery. At the Spring meeting a similar report must be sent, that a Narrative may be forwarded to the Assembly. At that time also the Clerk and Treasurer must submit to the Session the statistical report of the church which is to be sent to the General Assembly. The Records of Session must at that time be taken for examination and approval by Presbytery.

At the conference held with the Trustees, it was agreed that the travelling expenses of the Pastor and the delegate to Presbytery shall be hereafter paid by the Trustees. The Session resolved that the expenses of the prosecution committee shall be paid out of the Sessional fund.

XXII

ELDER AT PRESBYTERY

To my surprise and dismay, the Pastor informed me that Elder Perkins, who was a physician, had a serious case of sickness on hand, which he could not leave, and it was my duty to go on Tuesday as delegate to Presbytery. In vain I pleaded inexperience and the impropriety of our Session being represented at this important meeting by one, who had never been at Presbytery. He simply said it was my duty to go. As we were parting he added, "We will go together, and in any perplexity, you can apply to me for information, but remember that you must form your own judgments, and vote in every case on your own responsibility." The reports, records, and other papers were committed to my charge.

The meeting of Presbytery interested me greatly, and increased my appreciation of the dignity and importance of my office. Association with Ministers and Elders from other churches enlarged my ideas. The reports from the congregations and the Boards revealed how much was being done by others, and their methods of work made me realize that our Elders and communicants should be more systematic and zealous. I wished that all the members of Session could have been present. The trou-

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

ble which we had with Mr. Jones seemed very trivial, as we considered the various important questions, which demanded our careful attention, and the very serious troubles reported from other churches. It seemed that our case would be regarded as too insignificant to be taken up. However, it did receive due attention. Mr. Jones and his counsel were present, and placed the appeal on the table of the Stated Clerk, who reported it, and suggested that it be handed to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, which later recommended it to be given to the Judicial Committee. This received also other appeals and complaints, some of which were soon disposed of, as being out of order, or withdrawn at the parties' request, after receiving advice from members of Presbytery, or because the appellant, or complainant, failed to appear in person or by counsel. Others were reported to be in order, and ready for trial. When our case was so reported, I was somewhat excited and mystified when it was recommended to be tried by Commission. I got a seat by our Pastor, and asked an explanation. He told me that a committee had no power. It was appointed to obtain information and prepare business for the judicatory. A Commission, however, had the full power of the judicatory in the case submitted to it. Its decision was the judgment of the judicatory. Formerly many of the acts of Presbytery were done by Commissions, when the bounds were very extended and the means of transportation were slow and expensive. At present, Commissions are seldom appointed, except to take testimony, to

ELDER AT PRESBYTERY

visit churches and settle their difficulties, and those called Judicial Commissions. He pointed to the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Discipline. I felt ashamed that I, a delegate in Presbytery, knew so little of the Standards of the church.

“ 118. The General Assembly, each Synod, and each Presbytery under its care, shall have power to appoint Judicial Commissions from their respective bodies, consisting of Ministers and Elders, in number not less than eighteen (18) from the General Assembly, not less than twelve (12) from any Synod, and not less than seven (7) from any Presbytery.

“ 119. All judicial cases may be submitted to such Commissions, and their decisions shall be subject to reversal only by the superior judicatory or judicatories, except in matters of law, which shall be referred to the appointing judicatory for adjudication; and also all matters of constitution and doctrine may be reviewed by the appointing body, and by the superior judicatory or judicatories.

“ 120. Such Commissions shall sit at the same time and place as the body appointing them, and their findings shall be entered upon the minutes of the appointing body; provided, however, that a Commission appointed by Presbytery may also sit during the intervals between the meetings of the appointing Presbytery. The quorum of any such Commission shall not be less in number than three-fourths of the members appointed, and shall be the same in all other respects as the quorum of the appointing judicatory.”

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Until lately, the Pastor informed me, judicial cases were often referred, *with consent of parties*, to Commissions, but if either party objected, the case was heard by the full judicatory. Now the judicatory determines whether it shall be tried by the body, or by a Commission. Much time is thus saved, and a more satisfactory decision can be arrived at by a few persons carefully selected, than by the full judicatories, since they have grown so large.

The appeal of Mr. Jones was heard at length by the Commission. After the parties had presented their pleas, "the appellant opening and closing," our Pastor and I were called in and opportunity was given to us, as "the members of the judicatory appealed from to be heard." We each said a few words, and answered some questions. The original parties and we retired. Soon after the Commission reported that the appeal was not sustained, and the decision of the Session was confirmed. Mr. Jones then gave notice of an appeal to Synod.

I was appointed on three committees, and learned much of the application of our Presbyterian government, and the methods and extent of the benevolent operations of our church. I noticed that Elders were appointed on every committee, and their opinions and votes were respected as much as those of the Ministers. There were not as many Elders present as was required, for some of the Sessions were not represented. The Presbytery has the right to reprove the Sessions, and these should censure the delegates for this neglect, if the excuse be not satisfactory. The speeches were usually made

ELDER AT PRESBYTERY

by the Ministers, but the Elders were always encouraged to speak, and were listened to with respect. They took a more prominent part in all questions of finance and business. They were also in the majority in the Committee on Disabled Ministers and the Widows and Orphans of Deceased Ministers. During one of the recesses of Presbytery the Elders held an interesting meeting, for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with each other, and to discuss the nature of our office, and especially how we may become more efficient in sustaining the Pastors and helping them in their work.

The first half hour of the morning sessions was always devoted to a prayer meeting. This I found very helpful as a preparation for the responsibilities of the day. I was sorry that so many were unable to attend. Meetings of committees, the preparation of reports, etc., detained a number. Others whose churches were in the neighborhood returned to their own homes for the night, others were lodged at a distance, and did not get back in time. Some did not seem to appreciate the privilege and duty. I was greatly edified by the Moderator's opening sermon, but many of the delegates did not arrive until the next morning. This seemed to be a serious neglect of duty, a great loss to them personally, and a bad influence on the congregation which was entertaining us. My Pastor agreed with me in this, but said we must not judge others unfavorably. There are often in church work emergencies which others cannot understand, that

detain delegates who desire to be present. When a Minister or an Elder is systematically absent at the devotional services of a judicatory, we must feel that there is some lack of spirituality.

Our Synod is a delegated body. At first all the Synods were larger Presbyteries, being composed of the Ministers and delegates from the churches, within a district including at least three Presbyteries. But many Synods are now so large, that it would be difficult to entertain all the members, or to obtain a building in which they could be accommodated. Therefore, after the reunion, when the boundaries of the Synods were made, as far as practicable, conterminous with those of the several States, the Form of Government was amended to read that "The Synod may be composed, at its own option, with the consent of a majority of its Presbyteries, either of all the Bishops and an Elder from each congregation in its district, with the same modifications as in the Presbytery, or of equal delegations of Bishops and Elders, elected by the Presbyteries on a basis and in a ratio determined in like manner by the Synod itself and its Presbyteries."

One morning, nominations were made for the delegates, Ministers and Elders, for the next meeting of Synod, and the list was posted near the door of the church, that all might make out their ballots, which were collected in the afternoon. As I did not know the persons nominated, I consulted my Pastor as to my ballot. He was one of those elected.

Our prosecuting committee will also be present to

ELDER AT PRESBYTERY

defend the Session against Mr. Jones' appeal. They will be sent by our Session, and will have no standing in Synod except as one of the original parties in that judicial case. The delegates of our Presbytery at Synod will have an opportunity to be heard in the trial of the appeal.

The position, privileges, and duties of Elders in Synod are similar to those in the Presbytery, except that in the delegated Synods they are the representatives of Presbyteries, rather than of the particular churches. Sometimes they receive instructions as to how they are to vote on certain questions, but this seems to be inconsistent with their character as Elders and as delegates. It is right that they should be elected because of their known agreement with the views of the Presbytery on the subjects which are to come before the higher judicatory. But they ought to be free in voting, influenced by the information obtained in the Synod, where the matter is carefully considered in all its bearings and removed from local prejudices.

Popular meetings were held evēry evening during the session of Presbytery, and were of great interest. At one the relation of Elders to their Pastors was considered. The addresses were made by two Ministers and two Elders. Loyalty, mutual confidence, and coöperation in church worship and work were insisted on. One evening a student was licensed to preach, and two Licentiates were ordained as Evangelists, one for the home and the other for foreign service. They had been examined by committees composed of Ministers, in open Presbytery, except

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

in the languages, which was done in private and a report made to the court. Their sermons and lectures were in part delivered before all. We Elders were at liberty to ask questions during the examination, and were called upon to vote on sustaining the parts of trial, and on their being licensed and ordained. But we took no part in the act of ordination, which is a prerogative of Ministers. Our responsibility is great, and has often been exercised in keeping unworthy men out of the ministry.

Another Licentiate was present, and a call from one of our churches was found in order. He asked that he might be examined and ordained at this meeting of Presbytery, but the Elders of the church urged that it would be more for the edification of their church if the examination, as well as the ordination and installation could be held before their own congregation, at an adjourned meeting of the Presbytery. It was so ordered. This meeting is to be held on Thursday of next week, and I, as delegate, must be present then also.

At my suggestion our Pastor invited the Presbytery to hold its next Spring stated meeting in our church. And we, with the rest of the Session, were appointed the committee of arrangements.

At the next meeting of our Session, I was called on to report my attendance and diligence at the Presbytery, which was approved, except that, for my own convenience, I had left the Presbytery about two hours before its adjournment. The Pastor added some important details of the proceedings, but gave no report, as he was not accountable to us,

ELDER AT PRESBYTERY

but to the Presbytery. I stated, that it would be very inconvenient for me to attend the adjourned meeting, and asked to be relieved. The Moderator said that it had been decided, that it was in order to appoint another delegate to such a meeting, when the business, as in this case, was not a continuation of that which had been considered in the former meeting. Elder Perkins was then appointed.

XXIII

THE SYNOD

The Pastor was pleased that I took so much interest in the Presbytery, and invited me to go with him to the meeting of Synod. He also desired to have me present to watch the progress of the appeal of Mr. Jones, as he had several matters of importance to attend to. I went at my own expense, and was glad to do so. I found good accommodations at the hotel, but the Committee of Entertainment heard of my presence, and insisted on sending me to a family whose guest had disappointed them. My visit proved pleasant and profitable.

This larger gathering of Ministers and Elders charged with more extended interests, necessitated more formality in conducting the business. The impression made upon me by this great assembly, representing over 200,000 communicants, enlarged my idea of the size and unity of our Presbyterian Church. The members were evidently conscious of their responsibility, and manifested a desire for hearty coöperation. It was delightful to notice the joyful greetings of Ministers and Elders from different parts of the State, and the eagerness with which they inquired about their several churches. This impression was increased, when I was in-

THE SYNOD

formed that, while this Pennsylvania Synod is the largest, there are thirty-one of these judicatories, which embrace 7,573 churches, 6,942 Ministers, 27,025 Elders, and 943,716 communicants. There are many other branches of the Presbyterian Church in these United States, which are in such agreement that there seems no good reason for delaying an organic union, which would give us a church of over 14,000 Ministers, and 18,000 churches. A plan for the federation of these bodies is now under consideration.

The Synod was to have met at Harrisburg, but owing to the convening of a large political mass meeting in that city at this time, it was thought desirable to change the place of meeting to Philadelphia. This could have been done, had the need been known in time, by the General Assembly on petition from a Presbytery. Or the Moderator might have called a "pro re nata" meeting of the Synod, to order the change; this plan is, however, of doubtful propriety, as no provision is distinctly made in the Form of Government for the calling of such a meeting, and the General Assembly in 1874 disapproved of the act of the Synod of Michigan in holding a "pro re nata" meeting. Or the Moderator might assume the responsibility of giving due notice to all the Presbyteries that the meeting would be held at Philadelphia, and when the Synod met his action could have been approved, and the General Assembly petitioned to legalize and confirm the meeting. The plan, however, adopted was, the Presbyteries were all notified by the Moderator, in

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

good time, that for the above given reason a quorum would meet in Harrisburg, at the time appointed, and immediately adjourn to meet an hour later in the First Church, Philadelphia, where the other delegates would begin the service of opening, on the reception of a telegram that the proposed action had been taken. It is very important that the legality of the meeting be unquestioned. For the validity of spiritual and temporal decisions is involved.

The opening sermon should have been preached by the Moderator of the last meeting, but he was sick. He had prepared and sent his sermon, which at the request of Synod was read by the Stated Clerk, the last Moderator present presiding until a new one was elected. The first day was taken up by these opening services, the perfecting the roll, the election of the Moderator, the appointment of two temporary Clerks (in this case one of these was an Elder), the administration of the Lord's Supper, and a popular meeting in the evening. All these were of great interest. The only drawback to full enjoyment was the use of so-called unfermented wine, which many of the members conscientiously believed to be unauthorized. They either absented themselves, remaining silent, or did not partake of the cup.

The next morning, after the devotional hour, the Moderator announced the committees, which he had appointed assisted by the Clerks. I noticed that these corresponded with those in the Presbytery, except that they were larger. Elders were

THE SYNOD

upon each of them, and as far as possible each Elder present was placed on at least one committee. This brought responsibility on all, and became the means of practical instruction to the Elders.

The position and duties of the Elders in Synod are similar to those in the Presbytery, except that greater interests are at stake, and the consideration of business is further removed from local prejudices. The several Boards received special attention, and were represented by some of the Secretaries. The presentation of these causes was very interesting, and greatly enlarged my conception of the extensive work undertaken by our church, and the urgency of the demands made upon the Boards. One of the chief objects of the Synod, is the consideration of these benevolent operations, to impart to the members a statement of the condition and needs of the treasuries, and to devise how the Presbyteries may coöperate with the Boards. Much was said of "the Sustentation Fund." Our own, as some of the other large Synods, has undertaken to relieve the Board of Home Missions of the charge of the feeble churches within its bounds, that it may be free to send more of its income to sustain missionaries in the great West. Our congregations, without diminishing their contributions to the Board, are expected to make special contributions to this Sustentation Fund. Several Elders spoke earnestly on this subject, when it was said that some of the Pastors had hesitated to add this to their list of collections.

The appeal of Mr. Jones against the decision

of the Presbytery was, among the appeals and complaints, handed to the Stated Clerk. It was tried by a Commission. The prosecuting committee of our Session was present, as one of the original parties. Our Pastor advised the committee to secure Rev. Dr. Hawes, a member of the Synod, as counsel. When the Commission met, it was found that Mr. Jones, while retaining Elder Smith, had engaged Rev. Dr. Alcorn, of another Presbytery of the Synod, as his counsel. The case was examined, as before Presbytery, and the appeal was not sustained. Mr. Jones at once gave notice of appeal to the General Assembly, but was informed that the case could be carried no further, as it did not involve the doctrine or constitution of the church. The Synod is, therefore, in many cases the court of final appeal. And this adds much to the importance of its meetings.

Several overtures from Presbyteries were presented. Some of these were, with or without endorsement, forwarded to the General Assembly. Others were concerning local administration, and were either acted on, or, when necessary, transmitted to the Presbyteries for their approval. One requested that the bounds of a Presbytery might be so changed as to include a congregation whose Session desired to be under its jurisdiction. This came from the Session. Action was deferred, because the Presbyteries had not been consulted. Another was from two adjoining Presbyteries asking to be united, as they were small and believed that their efficiency would be greatly increased by

THE SYNOD

consolidation. They had agreed upon the name to be borne by the new body. It was so ordered. Another was from a Presbytery complaining that another had refused to take action in regard to one of their Ministers, who was preaching within its bounds and causing dissensions in one of the churches. A Commission was appointed to meet representatives of both Presbyteries and determine what should be done. Another brought a similar complaint against a Presbytery belonging to another Synod over which this judicatory has no jurisdiction. It was returned to the Presbytery with instructions to follow course described in the new sections, 120, 121, 122, of the Book of Discipline.

“Section 120. Any judicatory deeming itself aggrieved by the action of another judicatory of the same rank, may present a memorial to the judicatory immediately superior to the judicatory charged with the grievance, and to which it is subject, after the manner prescribed in the sub-chapter on Complaints (sections 83-93, Book of Discipline), save only that with regard to the limitation of time, notice of said memorial shall be lodged with the Stated Clerks both of the judicatory charged with the offence and of its next superior judicatory, within one year from the commission of the said alleged grievance,” etc., etc. Formerly relief could be obtained only by complaint to the General Assembly.

Another important part of the work of Synod is duty of Review and Control, which is conducted by

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

the careful examination of the records of the several Presbyteries. Committees, composed of Ministers and Elders, were appointed on these records, and at a set time reported recommending their approval, with or without exceptions. I noticed that some of these records were sent in printed form. This under certain regulations has been allowed since 1884. I wish that our Presbytery would adopt the plan. It would be a great convenience and means of instruction to the Elders, to receive and preserve these printed records. Our Synod's minutes and reports are printed and distributed to the Ministers and Sessions.

XXIV

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly meets every year on the third Thursday in May at 11 A.M. It was my privilege to be present this year as a visitor. It is the highest court of our Church, and "represents in one body all the particular churches of this denomination." It is composed of Commissioners chosen by the Presbyteries "in the following proportion, viz.: each Presbytery consisting of not more than twenty-four Ministers shall send one Minister and one Elder; and each Presbytery consisting of more than twenty-four Ministers, shall send one Minister and one Elder for each twenty-four Ministers, or for each additional fractional number of Ministers not less than twelve; and these delegates so appointed shall be styled Commissioners to the General Assembly." Should more than this number be sent, the last on the list will not be received. This gives us a very large and expensive body, and many plans have been proposed to decrease it. But it ought to be large, for it represents a vast church, and has great responsibilities resting upon it. Its size becomes its dignity and is in keeping with its authority.

It is the natural outgrowth of our Church in this country. "The Presbytery" was formed in 1704,

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

of seven Ministers. In twelve years (in 1716), it had so increased that it was deemed wise to divide it into three Presbyteries, and organize the Synod of Philadelphia. In 1788, the Synod was divided into four, and the first meeting of the General Assembly, constituted out of these four Synods, was held on the third Thursday of May, 1789, in the Second Presbyterian Church, in Philadelphia, and was opened with a sermon by Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon. Its legal title is "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." In 1838, there was a disruption into two bodies, called the Old and the New School Churches, whose Assemblies each claimed to be the real successor of the Assembly of 1837. These two bodies were reunited in 1869, under the same title. In 1861 the Southern Presbyterian Churches were organized into a separate Church, whose highest judicatory now bears the title of "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States." Many efforts have been made to accomplish a union between this body and our own.

The General Assembly differs from the lower judicatories, in that it represents the whole Church; is the highest court of appeals; alone can interpret the laws of the church, or make changes (with consent of the Presbyteries) in the Constitution; is the bond of union of the churches; the means of correspondence with other denominations; superintends the benevolence of the church; provides for the increase of the ministry; and is not a permanent body—a new Assembly is called each year. Its

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

business is conducted in the same manner as that of the Synod, and the standing and duties of the Elders are also the same.

The opening sermon was preached by the Moderator of the last Assembly. Had he been absent, "the last Moderator present, being a Commissioner," would have preached and presided until a new Moderator could be elected. Each Commissioner presented a commission from his Presbytery to a committee which sat before the service, to make out the roll. Defective commissions were reported to the Assembly for approval or rejection. Several Elders and Ministers neglected to present their commissions to this committee, and thus lost their votes in the election of Moderator. The Secretaries of the Boards are recognized as corresponding members "in discussions bearing upon the interests of the Boards which they severally represent." Correspondence with other denominations is maintained (1) by letters between committees appointed by each body; (2) by delegates who are annually chosen, and address the highest judicatory of each body, and to whom responses are made by the chief officer; these have no right to deliberate or vote; (3) those churches holding the Presbyterian system, by the formation in 1875 of "The Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System." At this meeting twenty-two organizations in various parts of the world were represented. It now includes ninety-one, and represents about 4,800,000 communicants, and 25,000,000 members and adherents.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

A council of the Alliance is held every four years and has a General Secretary who resides in London, England.

In forming the committees for the General Assembly, each commissioner was appointed on at least one. These all involve considerable responsibility, and are of great educational importance. The records of the thirty-two Synods were examined by committees of seven each. The other Standing Committees were large. Several judicial Commissions, of at least eighteen, were appointed, which tried complaints and appeals involving "the doctrine and Constitution of the church." The Committee on Polity is one of the most important, as to it are referred the overtures from the lower judicatories, in regard to interpretations of the Constitution and proposed changes. These are carefully considered and replies are reported to the Assembly for its action. Changes in the Constitution may be effected according to the new chapter of the Form of Government enacted in 1891:

"Chapter XXIII. of Amendments.

"1. Amendments or alterations of the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for Worship may be proposed by the General Assembly to the Presbyteries, but shall not be obligatory on the Church, unless a majority of all the Presbyteries approve thereof in writing.

"2. Amendments or alterations of the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, may be proposed to the Presbyteries by the General Assembly, but shall not be obligatory on the Church,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

unless they shall be approved in writing by two-thirds of all the Presbyteries, and agreed to and enacted by the General Assembly next ensuing; and the written votes of the Presbyteries shall be returned to that Assembly.

“ 3. Before any amendments or alterations of the Confession of Faith, or the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, proposed by the General Assembly, shall be transmitted to the Presbyteries, the General Assembly shall appoint—to consider the subject—a committee of Ministers and Ruling Elders, in number of not less than fifteen, of whom not more than two shall be from any one Synod, and the committee shall report its recommendations to the General Assembly next ensuing, for action.

“ 4. No alterations of the provisions contained in this chapter for amending or altering the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, or of this fourth section, shall be made, unless an overture from the General Assembly submitting the proposed alterations shall be transmitted to all the Presbyteries, and be approved in writing by two-thirds of their number, and be agreed to and enacted by the General Assembly.

“ 5. It shall be obligatory on the General Assembly to transmit to the Presbyteries, for approval or disapproval, any overture respecting amendments or alterations provided for in this chapter, which shall be submitted to the same Assembly by one-third of all the Presbyteries. In such cases the overture shall be formulated and transmitted by the General Assembly receiving the same to the Presbyteries

for their action, subject, as to all subsequent proceedings, to the provisions of the foregoing sections.

“6. Whenever it shall appear to the General Assembly that any proposed amendments or alterations of the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, or Directory for Worship shall receive a majority vote of all the Presbyteries, the General Assembly shall declare such amendments or alterations to have been adopted, and the same shall immediately go into effect.

“7. Nothing in this chapter shall be so construed as to affect the right of two-thirds of the Presbyteries to propose amendments or alterations of the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, or of the General Assembly to agree to and enact the same.”

The question which perhaps excited the most interest in this Assembly was respecting the control to be exercised over the Theological Seminaries. The power to veto the election of new professors does not seem to be sufficient guarantee to the Church that these Seminaries shall continue to teach sound doctrine. Nor is the withdrawal of the recommendation of the General Assembly sufficient to prevent our candidates attending disapproved Seminaries, or the funds, given for sound doctrinal training, being diverted to the inculcation of error. The charters of these Seminaries, the connection of some with Universities, and their various methods of supervision present difficulties. But the plan now under consideration will probably, after some modifications, be adopted and prove effective.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The annual reports of the several Boards, the instructions given to them, and their popular meetings form important features of the Assembly's session, and were of great value. They attracted much attention from the many visitors and the residents of the city. The Women's Boards held their annual meetings at the same time and in another church in the city, and brought together a large number of our most active women from all parts of the country, and many Missionaries from home and foreign fields.

The expenses of the Assembly are borne by an assessment of the Presbyteries of three cents per communicant for the Mileage Fund (travelling of Commissioners), one and a half cents for the Entertainment Fund, one and a half for the Contingent Fund. The assessment is only a recommendation, but it is urged upon all the Presbyteries. Some, however, pay the expenses of their own Commissioners and make what contribution each may see fit to the expenses of others. Missionaries have their expenses paid from and to their homes in this country.

On my return home, our Pastor arranged a meeting in the church, at which one of the Commissioners of our Presbytery, a foreign Missionary and I made addresses concerning the meeting of the Assembly, and the business transacted. He said that he purposed to have such a meeting after every General Assembly.

XXV

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

We are in great trouble. It is nearly a year since the Pastor told us about the visit of the committee from a city church. Our people and Session have been very harmonious and have developed much efficiency. Mr. Jones lost his case in the Synod, and was vexed when he discovered that he could not carry it any further. "The Synod's decisions on appeals, complaints, and references, which do not affect the doctrine or Constitution of the Church, are final." "The General Assembly shall receive and issue all appeals, complaints, and references that affect the doctrine or Constitution of the Church, which may be regularly brought before them from the inferior judicatories." He still talks unpleasantly, but his influence in the congregation has really ceased, and others have taken warning from this act of discipline.

But we had a meeting of Session this evening which the Pastor desires to be regarded as confidential for the present. He informed us that the same church had sent another committee to hear him, and after the evening service on Sabbath they had a long conversation with him. They had not yet secured a Pastor, and the minds of their Session and nominating committee have again been turned to-

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

wards him. They were more than ever anxious that he should at least visit them. He once more asked each of us, if we knew anything in the congregation that might make it desirable for him to resign, or that should help him in deciding what may be his duty in the case. We replied that we knew no reason why he should leave us, and we gave him many reasons which seemed to render his remaining very important. He said that he was surprised and sorry that the question had again arisen. He had given the committee no encouragement beyond the promise to lay the matter before us, and let them know in a few days whether he would visit them. He thought he could see some indications of God's will in the peculiar manner in which this proposition was made, and felt that he ought carefully to consider it before rejecting it. He asked for our prayers and sympathy. One of the Elders inquired whether the financial advantages influenced him. He said no, he did not know what the salary would be, but all things considered he did not think it would be more, considering the additional expenses of living in the city, than what he was now receiving. He was in doubt when the Session adjourned, but when I called the next day, he said that he had written that he would spend a Sabbath with them, and leave it with them to decide whether he should preach, and if he did; it must be as a supply, and not as a candidate. He had engaged Mr. Alexander to preach for him without telling him his object in being absent.

We have had another meeting of Session. The

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Pastor, after long consideration, has decided that he ought to accept a call, if that church can heartily unite on him, and had so informed the committee. He had just received a letter stating that, at a congregational meeting, regularly called and well attended, a unanimous call had been made for him. He wished the matter to be kept quiet until he should himself announce his decision next Sabbath. He consulted with us as to the steps now to be taken, and as to the time when his resignation should take effect. A transition state was always unfavorable both to Minister and people; and the church work, here and in the city, for the winter should begin as soon as possible. He had written that he was ready to accept the call should the Presbytery put it in his hands.

There are three plans of procedure that are in order. 1. The commissioners, appointed by the city church to prosecute the call, may present it to their Presbytery at a stated, or a "pro re nata" meeting, and after it has been found in order and approved, obtain permission to prosecute it before our Presbytery. This could be done either at a regular meeting or one called for that purpose. Our Presbytery would then send written citations to our Pastor and to this church to appear at the next meeting and show cause why the call should not be placed in his hands. "This citation shall be read from the pulpit of the church, by a member of the Presbytery appointed for that purpose, immediately after public worship, so that at least two Sabbaths shall intervene betwixt the citation and the meeting

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

of the Presbytery at which the cause of translation is to be considered." The Pastor is often appointed to read this citation. The Session would have to call a meeting of the congregation to appoint commissioners to answer this citation.

2. This part of the procedure may be considerably shortened. The Pastor, on being informed that the commissioners are to appear at a certain time before our Presbytery with the call, may ask the Session to summon a meeting of the congregation to appoint commissioners to attend that session of the Presbytery, and state that they are ready to appear in behalf of the congregation, thus obviating the delay of citation, etc.

3. The process may be still further shortened, by the Pastor informing the congregation, at a meeting called for that purpose, that he was ready to accept the call of which he had been notified, and asking the congregation, to unite with him in requesting the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation, and to appoint the required commissioners. He could then without delay be dismissed to the other Presbytery, and the call could be prosecuted there, without the commissioners of the city church coming to our Presbytery. The pastoral relation could then be dissolved, and having received proper testimonials, he would be required "to repair to that Presbytery, within bounds of which the congregation calling lies, that proper steps may be taken for his regular settlement in that congregation."

We decided to adopt the last of these plans. For if the translation is to be accomplished, the interests

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

of both churches demand that there should be as little delay as possible. It was ordered that notice be given for two Sabbaths that a meeting of the congregation will be held for this purpose, and it shall be distinctly stated, that all communicants in good standing and all other persons who contribute to the support of the church, have the right and duty to be present and vote at said meeting. This has been the rule in our congregation. In some places the charter and usage restrict the privilege of voting to the communicants, as in the Southern Presbyterian Church. Our own Assembly has declared that this is "wholly legitimate and might profitably become more prevalent." The Form of Government says, "No person shall be entitled to vote, who refuses to submit to the censures of the church, regularly administered, or who does not contribute his just proportion, according to his own engagements, or the rules of that congregation, to all its necessary expenses." The officers of that meeting are the Moderator and Clerk of Session. In this case, as the matter concerns the Pastor, he suggested that Rev. Mr. Alexander be appointed by the Session to preside. This was done.

A large number of our people were present at the congregational meeting, and after prayer by Mr. Alexander, the Session's call of the meeting was read, and the Pastor read a brief statement of his reasons for making the request and the circumstances which resulted in the call from the city church. To this he added a few words concerning his delight in his present work, and the regret which

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

he felt in deciding that it was his duty to accept this call. He was ready to answer questions should any one desire further information. One or two were asked and answered, and he retired, that the congregation might be the more free in their deliberations. He urged the people, however, to make no opposition to his request, as his sense of duty was clear. After he retired, there was much discussion. Many insisted that we should protest against his leaving, but it was finally resolved, that commissioners be appointed to present to Presbytery resolutions, which we adopted, consenting with great regret to unite with him in the request that the pastoral relation be dissolved, and expressing our appreciation of his character as a christian and a Minister, of his fidelity and efficiency as a Pastor, and of our sincere sorrow in parting with him. An Elder, a Trustee, and one of the communicants were appointed to inform the Pastor of our action, and to appear as commissioners before Presbytery.

As the stated meeting of Presbytery would not be held for some time, it was thought best to ask the Moderator to call a "pro re nata" meeting. This was done by a request signed by the Pastor and Rev. Mr. Alexander "and two Elders, the Elders being of different congregations." The Moderator of Presbytery sent "a circular letter, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every Minister belonging to the Presbytery and to the Session of every vacant congregation, in due time previous to the meeting, which shall not be less than ten days. And nothing shall be transacted

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

at such special meeting besides the particular business for which the judicatory has been thus convened."

The Presbytery met in our church, the call for the meeting was read and found in order. A Minister offered a resolution that another candidate be received under care of Presbytery and recommended to the Board of Education. The Moderator informed him that he was out of order, as nothing could be transacted at that meeting but the items of business mentioned in the call. These items were: the dissolution of the pastoral relation, and the dismissal of our Pastor to the city Presbytery. The minutes of the congregational meeting were read and the Pastor and our commissioners were heard. The request was granted and several Ministers and Elders spoke very feelingly of their high estimation of the character and services of our Pastor, and of their regret in parting from him. Rev. Mr. Thomas was appointed to preach in our church one week from the next Sabbath and to declare the pulpit vacant. At our request, Rev. Mr. Alexander was appointed Moderator of our Session until the next meeting of Presbytery, and we were permitted to supply the pulpit until then. We were reminded of the rule of this Presbytery that every other Sabbath the unemployed Ministers of the Presbytery shall in turn be invited by the Session to preach. They may, or may not, be regarded as candidates, as the Session may see fit. The object of this rule is to bring our unemployed Ministers and vacant churches into correspondence which

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

may lead to settlement. Our Presbytery has adopted other rules for the guidance of vacant churches, viz.:

1. No meeting of Session shall be held without the appointed Moderator.
2. The Session alone can invite Ministers to preach.
3. No one can be Stated Supply who is not a member of the Presbytery or approved by its committee.
4. The expenses of the Moderator in coming to preside shall be paid by the Session or congregation.
5. The Session shall make careful inquiries concerning every one proposed as a candidate, before he is permitted to preach.

The dissolution of the pastoral relation is to take effect on the first Sabbath of next month, the day Mr. Thomas is to declare the pulpit vacant. Our Pastor retains his full office until then, and is a member of the Presbytery until he is actually received by that to which he has been dismissed. In the meetings of Session he has had several conferences with the Elders in respect to our new and heavy responsibilities. He expressed his great satisfaction that during his ministry here there had been no lack of harmony in the Session or church, and he hoped that we would be able to continue in perfect peace. But we must now be especially careful. When a church is without a Pastor, there is always a great danger of divisions arising in the congregation, which often lead to very serious results. He charged us with constant prayer to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We asked him what was the usual cause of church troubles, and how these were to be avoided. He was pleased

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

to answer, because the responsibility of maintaining the unity and harmony of the church would now rest chiefly on us, and none but our senior Elder had had experience in this. He said that church troubles, as all others, are caused by sin. One sinner destroyeth much good. There is a great deal of unsanctified human nature in communicants and church officers, as well as in those in whom the good work has not begun. It takes very little of this fire to kindle a great matter. Pastors and Elders should therefore make a careful study of human nature, sin, the devices and forms of temptations of the devil, and also of the methods of the Spirit in eradicating sin and transforming character, especially as these are manifested in ourselves. The beginnings of sin, and even the least appearance of evil are to be avoided. Officers should therefore give themselves to careful self-examination and constant watchfulness. In the Session, especially when without a Pastor, perfect frankness and mutual confidence should be carefully maintained. The Elders should take a loving oversight of the life and conversation of each other. There should be full harmony and loyalty in all consultations and operations. None should love pre-eminence. In regard to the flock, the Elders should study carefully the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, which sets forth the evils and sin of party spirit in the church and the duty of officers to reprove and counteract it, and to exercise discipline when needed. The choice of a new Pastor often is the occasion of the rise of parties in pressing the

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

individual preferences, which often cause divisions in the congregation to its spiritual and temporal injury. He urged us to retain the confidence of the people, to set them an example of loyalty, spiritual mindedness and unselfishness. The vacancy should continue as short a time as possible consistent with making a proper selection of a Pastor. The future of the church depends much on the man chosen. He should be sound in the faith, efficient and prudent in church work, and as a preacher attractive, both to the older and younger people. He advised us to be careful in our presentation of candidates, obtaining full information before permitting them to appear before the church. It would be advisable to have but one candidate at a time, before the congregation, and when one is elected, the Elders should set an example of welcoming him to full confidence and coöperation, whatever may be our individual preferences for other candidates.

I asked, "Can the church troubles be always avoided?" He replied, that as long as sin existed in officers and members, they were liable to arise, as they did even in the Apostolic churches. But seldom will they cause serious disturbance while the Pastor and Elders are loyal to each other. Should an Elder in any way encourage the offenders of the peace, he should be earnestly entreated as a brother and disciplined if he persists. The Pastor may, through age or infirmity or other causes, cease to preach to the edification of the people, or in some way become unacceptable. The Elders then have a delicate duty to perform. They should show an

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

appreciation of his past services, but lovingly and faithfully inform him of the feeling of the people. Very often this has led to the removal of the difficulty, by inducing him to make more careful preparation, or avoiding that which caused dissatisfaction. If this is not the result, further conference would probably induce the Pastor to seek advice of his brethren. Often the information is kept from the Pastor, until the dissatisfaction is so decided that nothing can be done without serious injury to both Pastor and people. He told us that sometimes the unacceptability is shown by diminished congregations, but the absentees are sinning against God and the church. Sometimes the salary is diminished, or the payments are delayed, but this is dishonorable, contrary to the vows made at the installation, and renders the Trustees liable to a civil suit. The conviction that the Pastor would not carry the matter to the courts makes the offence cowardly. Whisperings and insinuations against his ability or character, are sins which ought not to be so much as named among christians. Interference with his work or rendering him uncomfortable in his position are fightings against Christ.

A Pastor may suffer grievances, and these are often endured in silence. It is the duty of the Elders to secure his confidence and to be watchful that he at all times receive encouragement in his arduous work, that difficulties are removed, and that he has whatever is needful for the honor of religion and his comfort among them. When grievances do exist, he should freely confer with the Session. If

RESIGNATION OF PASTOR

they be of such a nature that the Elders cannot remove them, the matter should be referred to the Presbytery, or he should request that body to release him from his pastoral charge. The church would then be cited to show cause why this should not be granted.

The next Sabbath the Pastor preached his farewell sermon, reviewing the course of his ministry and stating what he had aimed to accomplish. He very affectionately urged the people to remember what he had preached, and to see to it that no other gospel should ever be proclaimed from that pulpit. He made a special appeal to those who had heard his invitations and warnings in vain. All were much affected, and very sorrowfully took leave of him.

XXVI

VACANT CHURCH

We found our responsibilities greatly increased in the absence of our Pastor. Mr. Alexander presided at our meetings, and was ever ready to give us counsel when asked. He responded to every call made upon him for ministerial service; but the whole responsibility of the pastoral labor fell on the Elders, and we were often in real perplexity, and made serious mistakes. One communicant was offended at the way an exhortation was given, who would have been corrected and made a devoted friend had the reproof been given by our Pastor. We each realized our individual responsibility, but at first we seemed to imagine that each had the whole power of Session, and therefore were constantly interfering with one another. We soon saw it to be necessary, and according to law, that nothing should be done, even by the senior Elder, without a formal vote of Session, and that committees and their chairmen should strictly confine themselves to the powers and instruction given, when they were appointed.

We agreed to take charge in turn of the mid-week prayer meetings and other regular services, our senior Elder being appointed to remind each of his duty in this respect and to find alternates, should

VACANT CHURCH

any one fail. Our most serious responsibility was the obtaining proper supplies for the pulpit. The excellent rules of the Presbytery were of great help. The Stated Clerk at once furnished us with a list of unemployed Ministers. There were only six of these, for it did not contain the names of those, who from age or infirmity could not preach acceptably. But it mentioned two licentiates who had lately finished their theological course. The Rev. Mr. Thomas, appointed to declare the pulpit vacant, preached the first Sabbath, and we invited one from this list to preach on the second, that we might have time carefully to consider some plan by which to select our supplies.

After consultation and in accordance with the advice of our Pastor, we determined to appoint two committees, one to be called the committee on supplies, consisting of three Elders, to take charge of the list of Ministers furnished by the Stated Clerk of Presbytery, and of those names approved by the Session. It shall be their duty to correspond with the Ministers and licentiates thus approved, and engage them to preach, giving them ample notice of their appointments. It was clearly understood that those thus invited were not in any case to be considered as candidates, and that they should be so informed. At a conference with the Trustees we determined what should be the compensation paid to these supplies, and their Treasurer agreed to see that each Minister received a check before he should leave town. The other was called the committee on nominations. At a conference with the

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

Trustees, we appointed three Elders and the Trustees added three from their number and these chose three communicants, two of whom were women. This joint committee were to receive from the Session the names of all possible candidates, to make inquiries concerning them, to visit them in their places of labor, and, when satisfied, to recommend to the Session the one they judge suitable to be our Pastor, that we may make arrangements to have him heard by the congregation and take whatever other steps might be deemed wise.

There are other methods of obtaining a Pastor. Often no committees are appointed. The Session itself, under the supervision of Presbytery, decides who shall preach, and all supplies of the pulpit are considered as possible candidates. These are heard until it appears that the congregation is prepared to select one as Pastor. This plan keeps the congregation on a constant tension, fosters a critical spirit which interferes with personal edification and the spirituality of the church. It not infrequently causes serious divisions in the congregation, by strong preferences for two or more of the many candidates heard. Another plan is, that the Session is very careful in selecting one candidate, who has been well recommended. It invites him to preach two or more Sabbaths, and, if possible, to remain during the week attending all the services and visiting the people. If he makes a favorable impression, the congregational meeting is called, and a final decision in his case is made before another is heard. This may do very well in some places, and for mis-

VACANT CHURCH

sion churches. Its advantage being that both parties have the opportunity of becoming well acquainted before the question of settlement is to be decided. The objection is evident, that Ministers who have been really efficient, would be unwilling to assume such a position, without some previous assurance that the church was ready to make out a call. Licentiates with no record of past services, or Ministers long unemployed, or compelled for some personal reason to settle in that locality, might be willing to undergo such a test of their qualifications.

Sometimes the Session, wishing to avoid the evils of candidating, invite a Minister to be the Stated Supply, on the recommendation of the former Pastor or other Minister in whom the Elders have confidence. He serves the church until the people manifest a desire to have him settled over them. The Ministers available to make such an arrangement are few, and are usually men not desired by an important church. The plan also leads in many cases to the perpetuation of the Stated Supply system, which our General Assembly has always discouraged.

Pastors have been called on their record, or on the recommendation of the former Pastor, without their having been heard by the people. But this places too much responsibility on the Minister recommending, and certainly such a call ought not to be accepted until both the Minister and the congregation have the opportunity of judging of their fitness for each other.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

We believe that the plan which we have adopted will prove the best for us in our circumstances. Several members of Presbytery and other Ministers have written to us recommending Ministers and licentiates as candidates, some of these recommendations were very strong. Some letters were from Ministers offering themselves, stating their reasons for desiring to leave their present charges, enumerating their qualifications and in some cases enclosing their photographs. These last the Session dropped into the waste basket. I was not certain that in all cases that was wise. We quickly disposed of the recommendations of the licentiates, because we all felt that our church needed a married man, and one who had several years' experience in the ministry. We were much touched by some of the letters from Ministers nominating themselves. Some had long labored in mission fields, others spoke of insufficient salaries, change necessary for the health of wife or children, of lack of educational advantages, and others had long contended nobly against a perverse Elder or a disaffected minority, which was determined to rule or ruin, notwithstanding all that Session or Presbytery had done for their relief. Some of these were handed to the nominating committee, together with several of the letters from Ministers and friends, for careful investigation.

I was on this nominating committee, and our senior Elder was chairman. At our first meeting a clerk was appointed to keep an accurate and detailed record of our decisions and of each paper referred to us by the Session. We selected from

VACANT CHURCH

the list four names of Ministers whose recommendations seemed most favorable. We divided ourselves into four committees, each to make further inquiries concerning one of these Ministers. When the results were not favorable the name was dropped, and another was given to that sub-committee. When it was deemed advisable two or more members were sent to the church in which the nominee was preaching, that without his knowledge, they might judge of his ability and see something of his work. If these were pleased, others were sent, including one of the lady members. The expenses of these visits were paid by the Trustees. Sometimes these visitors were empowered to have an interview with the Minister, and ascertain whether he would be willing to consider a call. If unwilling to appear as a candidate, yet consenting to examine our condition, and to permit more of the congregation to hear him preach, arrangements were made for him to supply another pulpit in the neighborhood. It was understood that as soon as our committee was satisfied that they had found a Minister qualified to be our Pastor, and on whom the congregation could unite, his name and all the facts should be reported to the Scssion, which would then invite him to preach for us as a candidate, and if there seemed to be a general desire manifested, arrangements could be made for his call.

While these plans were being carried out, the committee on supplies was notified one Saturday afternoon, that the Minister who was to preach the next day had been taken sick and would not be

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

able to come. They called on Mr. Alexander for advice in this emergency. He told them that he had just received a visit from an unemployed Minister, a Mr. Whyley, who was very anxious to get an opportunity to preach in our pulpit. He had discouraged him, and added that the whole matter was in the hands of the Session, and the nominating committee. He had consented to mention his name as a possible candidate. He recommended the committee, in the emergency, to call at the hotel, and ask him to supply the pulpit on the Sabbath; but he should be distinctly informed, that he would not be a candidate, until the nominating committee and the Session had invited him. This caused considerable trouble. He was a popular preacher and fascinated many of the younger people. He asked to be permitted to preach another Sabbath, and intimated that he could arrange to remain with us several weeks. He visited among the people, and tried to make friends with every one. We were asked by several whether a congregation could not meet to make out a call for him. He had intimated that the nominating committee had accomplished nothing, the Session was interfering with the undisputed rights of the people to choose their own Pastor, and paid little regard to their preferences. Some said we had been too long without a Pastor. The Session was much perplexed. Mr. Alexander was not satisfied with his manner of preaching nor with his conduct in our church, but did not know what we could do if the congregation demanded their right to elect him. We wrote to

VACANT CHURCH

our former Pastor, and in the meantime ordered the committee on supplies to keep the pulpit filled with other and attractive Ministers, and the nominating committee to inquire carefully into his record. He continued in the place, and exerted an influence which was not good. Our former Pastor replied, warning us against him. He was not sound in the faith, and had caused divisions and troubles in every church he had served. The nominating committee brought the Session a similar report. Mr. Whyley's friends formed a strong party, but fortunately our Session was not divided. The feeling became so strong that the Session had an interview with Mr. Whyley, and told him that he was disturbing the peace of the church; that the Session could not recommend nor nominate him; and even if he were called he would have a divided church. We acknowledged that we had no charges to bring against him, but were convinced he could not serve this church to edification. He replied that was an opinion others did not share, and that when elected he would know how to manage refractory Elders and a disappointed minority in the congregation. He intended to remain until after the congregational meeting. Many of our people became alarmed at the lack of harmony and the unholy excitement in our church, and some of Mr. Whyley's warmest advocates began to see his real character and condemned his behavior. The Session at last was advised to call a meeting of the congregation and to state plainly why we could not nominate Mr. Whyley, but to be careful not to imply

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

any charge against him. One of the Elders proposed that, as the nominating committee had a candidate whom they could recommend in every way suitable to be the Pastor, the Session place him, Rev. Mr. Butler, in nomination and let the congregation decide between them. To this the committee objected that it would not be fair to Mr. Butler, and might prevent his cordial election and acceptance; it would also make a distinct issue which would increase the party spirit now in the church. It was finally determined to call the congregational meeting, to simply state that the Session at this time had no nomination to make.

When the congregation met, the silence of the Session and the Trustees was significant. We declined to give a reason for our silence. We had been asked to call the meeting, and they who had made the request were probably prepared to make a nomination. When the Moderator, Rev. Mr. Alexander, put the usual question, "Is this congregation ready to proceed to the election of a Pastor?" only ten answered in the affirmative. Several speeches were made in regard to our past harmony and the importance of maintaining it. The desirability of obtaining a Pastor at once was often referred to, and the Session was asked whether it would, in the near future, be ready to nominate one. Our senior Elder said that it was nearly ready to do so. The desire seemed to increase, and one of the most earnest of Mr. Whyley's supporters suggested that the Session have leave to retire and see if a nomination could not be made that evening. Rev. Mr.

VACANT CHURCH

Alexander, the Elders, and the nominating committee then retired, after a Mr. Hopewell was placed in the chair. We soon returned, and reported that a Minister had been very highly recommended by several persons. All inquiries had resulted favorably, two separate sub-committees had visited his present charge, and all they had seen or heard had increased their desire to secure him. One of these sub-committees was authorized to confer with him, and found him much attached to his people and work, and at first very unwilling to consider the question of any change. He had consented to spend a Sabbath with us, at our convenience, if it could be arranged without committing him, or disturbing his own church. On request, we mentioned his name, Rev. Mr. Butler, and read the letters we had received, and the members of the sub-committee made verbal statements of their experiences in their visitation. The lady members related their impressions of him, of his interest in the Sabbath school, and his wife's influence in the church. Many questions were asked and answered. We stated that we had not intended to mention his name until the congregation had an opportunity of hearing him, and he had given some hope that he might accept a call. It was resolved, that the congregation was prepared to proceed to the election of a Pastor. When the ballots were counted, it was found that Mr. Butler was elected and that only four votes had been cast for Mr. Whyley, and two for other persons. One of the four moved that the election be made unanimous. This was carried.

THE RULING ELDER AT WORK

The salary and vacation were made the same, as for our last Pastor. The members of Session and the Trustees were appointed to sign the call in behalf of the congregation. Elder Dr. Perkins and Mr. Oakes, the President of the Board of Trustees, were selected commissioners to communicate with Rev. Mr. Butler, and to prosecute the call. All seemed much delighted with the result and the restored harmony of the church. Rev. Mr. Whyley left town early the next morning.

Rev. Mr. Butler was much surprised and gratified. He could, however, give no encouragement until he had conferred with his Session and ascertained by a visit more about our church and its condition. He also stipulated, that after he had preached for us, the congregation should be free to withhold the call, as he would be unwilling to accept if there should be any opposition. He came, and gave very general satisfaction, and arrangements were soon made for the action of Presbytery and his installation. The ladies and the Young People's Association had the manse cleaned and refitted. The Trustees undertook to engage packers to remove his furniture, and to defray the travelling expenses of the family. When they arrived a committee conveyed them to the manse, where everything was in readiness for them and tea on the table. The next day a welcome reception was given to the whole family in the parlors of the church.

INDEX

Absentees

- from communion, 44.
- from judicatories, 23, 122, 168.
- from services, 45, 53.

Alliance, Presbyterian, 138, 183.

Amendments to the Constitution, 184.

Appeals

- for benevolence, 106.
- judicial, 166, 178.
- notice of, 133, 135.
- and complaints, 133.
- courts of, 132, 166, 178, 188.
- papers of, 163.
- from Moderator's decision, 127.

"Assembly Herald," 86.

Auditors, 89.

Baptism, 32, 48, 50, 55, 142.

and Elders, 51, 57.

mode of, 32.

private, 56.

Romish, 32, 54.

and Session, 32, 49, 143.

sponsors in, 53.

vows in, 50, 56.

Baptized members, 51, 66.

disciplined, 68.

dismissed, 59.

Baptized members

- and the Sabbath school, 67.
- and the Session, 27, 37, 57, 67.
- roll of, 66.

and Lord's Supper, 37, 69.

Benevolence, 85, 90.

Bible, 7, 73.

Birth membership, 31.

Board of Education, 149, 158.

Board of Trustees, 20, 93.

Boards, 81, 85, 92, 187.

Boys' Brigade, 84.

Call to office, 5.

Call of pastor, 114.

Candidates for the ministry, 39, 148.

and Board of Education, 149, 152, 156.

and Elders, 151, 155.

examination of, 149.

after graduation, 160.

licensed, 171.

practical instruction of, 151, 157.

preaching, 137.

and Presbytery, 39, 151.

roll of, 156.

in vacation, 159.

Candidates for Pastor, 202, 206.

Certificates, 33, 60, 145.

INDEX

- Charges and specifications, 121.
 against judicatories, 179.
 Charters, 93, 108.
 Choirs, 101.
 Christmas festivals, 112.
 Church
 finances, 100.
 grievances, 198.
 meetings of, 13, 200.
 property of, 93.
 purity and peace, 9, 11.
 troubles, 116, 119, 196.
 unity of, 10, 196.
 vacant, 194, 200.
 "Church at Home and Abroad,"
 85.
 Citations, 122, 190.
 Clerks, 13.
 Collections, 85, 88, 90, 97, 105.
 Commissions, 127, 166, 179.
 judicial, 166, 168.
 Commissioners, 181.
 Committees, 168, 176, 184.
 on commissions, 183.
 on nominations, 114.
 of prosecution, 112, 136, 163,
 170, 178.
 on supplies, 114.
 Communicants
 class, 29.
 absent, 44, 53.
 demitted, 62.
 dismissed, 45, 59, 64.
 dropped, 45, 61.
 and Elders, 2, 7, 44.
 received, 29, 33, 37, 39.
 restored, 54.
 roll of, 44.
 and Standards, 7, 30.
 Communicants
 suspended, 45, 53, 63, 130.
 welcomed, 31, 43.
 vows of, 12, 18.
 Communion, 40.
 private, 41.
 wine at, 41, 176.
 Complaints, 133, 134, 179.
 "Confession of Faith," 7, 184.
 Confession of guilt, 130.
 Congregation
 charter of, 93, 108.
 cited, 190.
 commissioners of, 107.
 districted, 26.
 meetings of, 208.
 vows of, 18.
 Congregationalism, 9.
 Constitution amended, 184.
 Contumacy, 128.
 Correspondence, 183.
 Council, 123, 178.
 Courts of appeal, 132, 166, 178,
 188.
 Credibility of witnesses, 126.
 Deacons, 3, 20, 27, 40, 91.
 Deathbed repentance, 141, 143.
 Delegates, 161, 170, 177.
 expenses of, 96, 164, 174.
 Demission, 39, 62.
 Discipline, 8, 119.
 object of, 120.
 in Pastor's absence, 145.
 with process, 120.
 without process, 45, 63.
 subjects of, 68.
 Dismission
 of absentees, 45, 46, 60.

INDEX

Dismission

- of baptized, 59.
- certificates of, 59, 64.
- of communicants, 59.
- of officers, 63.

Dissent, 134.

Districts, 17, 26.

Elders

- absent, 23.
- advisors of Pastor, 116, 188.
- and the baptized, 37, 57.
- and candidates, 39, 151, 155.
- on committees, 68, 176, 184.
- and Deacons, 20, 27.
- and discipline, 119, 131.
- districts of, 17, 26.
- elected, 13, 15.
- and funerals, 140.
- and General Assembly, 184.
- installed, 18.
- and Lord's Supper, 40.
- meetings of, 113, 169.
- and music, 101.
- nominated, 1, 14.
- and offences, 119.
- ordained, 18.
- and Pastor, 19, 23, 27, 115, 138, 188, 198.
- permanent, 14, 16.
- in Presbytery, 165.
- qualifications of, 5.
- representatives of people, 3, 24.
- rotary, 13, 16.
- and Sabbath school, 27, 70, 76.
- and sacraments, 33.
- in Session, 20.

Elders

- and Standards, 7.
- in Synod, 174.
- and Trustees, 196.
- and troubles, 196.
- and ushers, 28.
- of vacant church, 195, 200.
- visitation of, 27, 141.
- vows of, 6.
- and Young People's Associations, 80.

Eldership, 2, 13, 15.

Electors, 15, 109, 192.

Entertainment fund, 187.

Envelope plan, 97.

Expenses

- of church, 100, 105.
- of commissioners, 187.
- of delegates, 96, 164.
- of Moderator, 195.
- of prosecuting committee, 164.

Family pew, 98.

Farewell sermon, 199.

Finances, 100, 105.

Foreign Missions, 87.

"Form of Government," 8.

Free pews, 8.

Funerals, 139, 148.

General Assembly, 181.

- and benevolence, 85, 90.
- and Boards, 187.
- committee of, 184.
- commissioners to, 181, 183.
- and Constitution, 184.
- and correspondence, 183.
- court of appeal, 178.

INDEX

- General Assembly
 expenses of, 187.
 first, 182.
 Moderator of, 183.
 and Seminaries, 186.
 and Standards, 184.
 Grievances, 178, 179.
- Home Missions, 86.
 Hymn books, 101.
- Infant baptism, 50, 55.
 Infant membership, 31.
 Infant salvation, 55.
 Installation, 18.
 Intemperance, 145.
- Judicial business, 25, 121.
 Judicial commissions, 166, 178.
 Judicial process, 123.
 Jurisdiction, 34, 39, 45.
- King's Daughters, 83.
- League, Westminster, 80.
 Library, 76.
 Lighting the church, 96.
 Local Evangelist, 154.
 Lord's Supper, 40.
 in private, 41.
- Meetings
 of church, 13, 108.
 of congregation, 107, 109,
 192, 207.
 of General Assembly, 181.
 of Presbytery, 193.
 of Session, 17, 22, 43, 47,
 144, 188.
- Meetings
 of Synod, 174.
 Ministers, 2, 15, 39, 190.
 Mission bands, 84, 87, 92.
 Mission boxes, 91.
 Missionary societies, 85.
 Moderator, 13, 22, 24, 127, 194.
 Monthly concerts, 85.
 Music, 101.
- Narrative of religion, 163.
 Nomination of Elders, 1, 14.
 Notice of appeal, 133, 135.
- Offences, 119.
 Offender, 119.
 Officers
 of congregational meeting, 13,
 192.
 of Sabbath school, 70.
 and Standards, 7.
- Ordination, 18, 171.
 vows, 6, 12, 18.
- Original parties, 134, 136, 163,
 178.
- Overtures, 159.
- Parlors, 104.
- Pastor
 called, 109, 209.
 candidates for, 202.
 dissatisfaction with, 117, 197.
 grievances of, 198.
 prerogatives of, 33.
 procured, 188, 196, 202.
 and pulpit, 139.
 resignation of, 178.
 and Sabbath school, 70, 80.
 salary of, 198.

INDEX

Pastor

- transferred, 190.
- vacation of, 138.
- visitation of, 27, 148.
- Pastoral relation, 195.
- Pews, 98.
- Picnics, 111.
- Pleas, 124, 130.
- Pledges, 78.
- Polity, 158.
- Prayer meetings, 81, 169.
- Presbyterian Alliance, 183.
- Presbyterianism, 8, 9.
- Presbytery, 161, 181.
 - and appeals, 166.
 - candidates, 177.
 - commissions of, 166.
 - delegates to, 161.
 - first, 181.
 - and license, 171.
 - meetings of, 161, 171.
 - ordain, 172.
 - and overtures, 159.
 - records of, 135.
 - and vacant churches, 195.
- Prizes, 74, 112.
- Profession of faith, 29, 37.
- Proportional giving, 90, 99, 105.
- Prosecuting committee, 121, 136, 163, 170, 178.
- Protest, 134.
- Pulpit supplies, 194, 201.

Quorum

- of commissions, 167.
- of Session, 22.

Reception

- of baptized, 29, 31.
- of communicants, 29, 31.

Reception

- of Sabbath school children, 74.
- Records, 16, 21, 180, 135.
- References, 134.
- Reports, 110, 187.
- Reserved list, 45.
- Resignations, 71, 188.
- Restoration, 131.
- Review and control, 135, 179.
- Ritualism, 73.
- Romish baptism, 32, 54.

Sabbath school, 70.

- building, 104.
- changes in, 75.
- lesson helps, 73.
- library, 76.
- music, 101.
- object of, 77.
- officers of, 70.
- prayer meeting of, 77.
- reception of scholars, 74.
- retaining scholars, 73.
- teachers' meeting, 72, 75.
- teachers' substitutes, 141.
- vacation, 140.
- and Young People's Association, 78, 80.

Sacraments, 40, 91.

Salary of Pastor, 198.

Salvation of infants, 55.

Session

- and baptism, 51, 55, 143.
- and baptized members, 51, 66.
- and Boards, 85.
- and candidates, 148.
- and collections, 85.
- and communicants, 18, 29, 44, 59, 64, 119.

INDEX

Session

- delegates of, 161.
- meetings of, 22, 43, 45, 113, 144, 188.
- Moderator of, 22, 24, 127, 194.
- and music, 101.
- nominations by, 1.
- and property, 94.
- quorum of, 22.
- records and reports of, 163.
- and Sabbath school, 70, 101, 140.
- and Sacraments, 33.
- and superintendent, 70.
- and trustees, 93, 95, 103, 105.
- of vacant churches, 194, 200.
- and Young People's Associations, 78, 80.
- Sewing societies, 91.
- Sin, the unpardonable, 48.
- Singing class, 103.
- Societies of young people, 78.
- Standards, 7, 30, 184.
- Stated supply, 203.
- Strangers welcomed, 98.
- Superintendent, 70.
- Sustentation Fund, 177.
- Synod, 174, 182.
 - and appeals, 178.
 - and Boards, 177.
 - committees of, 176.
 - commissions of, 178.
 - delegates to, 170.
 - and Elders, 171, 174, 177.
 - meetings of, 174.
 - time and place, 175.
 - Moderator of, 175.
 - overtures and, 178.
 - and Presbytery, 178.

Synod

- and Sustentation Fund, 177.
- Teachers' meeting, 72.
- Teachers' substitutes, 140.
- Temperance, 40, 81.
- Testimony, 122.
- Theological Seminaries, 153, 155, 158, 186.
- Tithes, 90, 99.
- Titles of General Assembly, 182.
- Trustees, 93, 97, 100, 105, 108.
- Unity of the church, 10, 196.
- Unpardonable sin, 48.
- Use of property, 93.
- Ushers, 28, 98.
- Vacant church, 194, 200, 208.
- Vacation
 - of pastor, 138.
 - of Sabbath school, 140.
- Visitation
 - by children, 74.
 - by committees, 114, 188, 201.
 - by Elders, 27, 141.
- Vows, 6, 12, 18, 79.
- Welcome of strangers, 98.
- Westminster League, 80.
- Wine at communion, 41, 176.
- Witnesses, 122.
- Women, 81.
 - Boards, 86, 187.
 - prayer meetings, 81.
 - presiding, 79.
 - Women's Temperance Unions, 81.
- Young people's societies, 78, 80.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



47 552 274

1- 4415

BK
9195
H7

101729
Hodge
Ruling Elder at work

1- 4415

1- 4415

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



47 552 274